THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAMS FOR

BLACK MALES AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS (PWIS)

A Scholarly Research Project
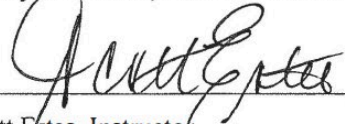
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of summer bridge programs on the transition, engagement, and retention of Black male students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Black males continue to face significant challenges in higher education, including low retention rates and limited feelings of belonging. The purpose of this mixed-methods research was to evaluate how summer bridge programs address these issues by enhancing academic preparedness, motivation to persist, and social integration for Black males at PWIs. The study sought to answer the following research questions: (1) How do summer bridge programs focused on Black males affect their transition from high school to college and overall retention at PWIs? (2) What motivates Black males to persevere toward graduation at PWIs? (3) How do summer bridge programs play a role in increasing the engagement of Black males at PWIs?

Using both quantitative surveys and qualitative semi-structured interviews, this research findings revealed that while summer bridge programs helped students foster an early sense of belonging, it was the support from dedicated staff and participants' families that sustained their motivation to succeed. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of culturally responsive programming that acknowledges the unique experiences and strengths of Black male students. These findings suggest that PWIs should prioritize targeted support programs and foster inclusive environments that affirm students' cultural identities, contributing to the broader discourse on educational equity and institutional commitment to Black male student success.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my incredible wife, Ingrid, whose unwavering support, patience, and understanding through countless late nights and weekends made this journey possible. Your encouragement kept me grounded and focused, and I am eternally grateful for every moment you stood by me.

I also dedicate this work to my family, especially my mother, my beloved "Nugchu," and my sister. Your understanding and constant encouragement over the years have been my foundation. Thank you for always believing in me and championing my dreams.

To the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), I am deeply thankful for giving me the chance to attend college. Without HEOP, I would not be where I am today. Also, to all of the students I've had the privilege to work with—you have inspired me, taught me, and made every moment of this journey worthwhile.

Finally, to my beloved dog, Zoe, who sat by my side through the latest of nights, offering silent companionship and comfort. I miss you deeply, my girl. This is for you, too.

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INTRODUCTION

Black males remain one of the least retained demographics in higher education,

especially at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Brooks et al., 2013). While institutions

have made strides in diversity and inclusion initiatives, Black male students often face challenges

related to academic preparedness, social integration, and a sense of belonging. This study

explores the role of summer bridge programs, focusing on how they impact Black males'

transition from high school to college and their overall retention at PWIs. The research also aims

to understand the motivation for persistence and how familial, social, and institutional support

influences Black male student success.

Understanding the historical context of racial inequality in education is crucial to framing

the challenges Black males face in higher education today. Landmark events like Brown v.

Board of Education (1954) laid the groundwork for dismantling segregation in American

schools, though progress was slow (Klarman, 1994). For example, Klarman (1994) found that

even years after the ruling, states like North Carolina and Virginia saw minuscule integration in

their schools until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination

based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. This history reflects the long-standing

educational inequities that still impact Black students today. The effects of systemic racism

extend into higher education, particularly at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), where

Black students, including males, often struggle with feelings of isolation, cultural disconnect, and

limited representation.

This study will formally examine how student support retention programs, particularly

summer bridge programs (from high school to college), impact traditional college-age Black

males at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). PWI is the term used to describe institutions of higher learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment (Lomotey, 2010). However, efforts to retain underrepresented students must take into account their cultural differences. According to Tinto (1993), it's important for students to become a part of the campus community. As part of this assimilation, students unlearn their own culture in favor of the established campus culture. Contrary to popular belief, research has found that underrepresented students' chances of graduating rise when they can assert their cultural identities.

This study examines the benefits of summer bridge programs for Black male students and how these programs influence their development, success, and adjustment to the college environment. The chapter will outline the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the definitions and assumptions that guide the research. It concludes with a discussion of the study's significance and an overview of the report's structure.

Statement of the Research Problem

Research Problem

Despite concerted efforts by colleges and universities to recruit and retain students of color, many minority students still struggle to find a sense of belonging within these institutions, which significantly impacts their persistence and success in higher education (Smith et al., 1997). Students of color, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds, often face challenges in navigating the academic expectations of college while simultaneously searching for a community where they feel supported and included (Smith et al., 1997). First-year students, in particular, are vulnerable to dropping out due to a combination of factors, including insufficient academic preparation, financial pressures, separation from family, and the absence of peers who share their cultural background (Bridgeforth, 2019). For many students, adjusting to the academic and social

demands of their first year in college can be overwhelming, but for students of color, who frequently experience heightened feelings of isolation and cultural alienation, this transition can be even more challenging (Bridgeforth, 2019).

This lack of a sense of belonging is particularly evident when examining the retention and graduation rates of Black males in higher education. National data reveal that Black males are retained and graduate at significantly lower rates compared to their peers. The national six-year graduation rate for all students is approximately 68%, while the graduation rate for Black students hovers around 45%, highlighting a 23-point gap (JBHE, 2020). Similarly, the average retention rate for Black males ranges between 65% and 70%, which is considerably lower than the national average, which sits at about 80% (NCES, 2023). The combination of academic challenges and the difficulty of finding a supportive community magnifies the issue of retention for Black males.

Another critical issue in higher education is the tendency to overlook the valuable forms of cultural capital that Black male students bring to college, such as aspirational, familial, and social resources. When these assets are not recognized or integrated into support systems, students may feel alienated and disengaged. While programs like summer bridge initiatives aim to bridge this gap, they often fall short unless they intentionally incorporate students' cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). Without this effort, Black males may continue to struggle with a sense of belonging and retention.

Furthermore, a strong sense of belonging is essential for the academic success and persistence of Black male students, especially at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). When students do not feel valued or included in the campus community, their ability to engage and succeed is compromised. Institutions must be proactive in creating environments where Black

male students can assert their cultural identities, rather than expecting them to assimilate into dominant norms. The failure to do so further exacerbates the challenges of retention and academic achievement for these students (Strayhorn, 2012).

As highlighted in the beginning of this section, the retention and graduation rates of Black males in higher education are particularly concerning, with research showing that the problem often begins before these students even reach college. Bir and Myrick (2015) point out that one of the key reasons for low academic achievement at the college level is the lack of rigorous academic preparation during high school. Black male students, in particular, often attend underfunded high schools with fewer academic resources, which leaves them ill-prepared for the rigors of college coursework. Bridging the gap between high school and college is crucial, as academic success in high school remains one of the strongest predictors of collegiate achievement (Bir & Myrick, 2015). Given the significant disparities in academic preparedness, creating support systems that help Black male students transition smoothly from high school to college is essential for improving their retention and graduation rates.

Challenges/Obstacles

One recurring theme is that many university administrators, faculty, and staff recognize the issue of Black male retention, which is a crucial step forward. Some institutions have even integrated diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles into their core strategic plans. However, while efforts are being made to create more welcoming campuses, the challenge of retaining Black male undergraduate students remains significant, particularly at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Bridgeforth, 2019). The implementation and evaluation of retention initiatives designed to support Black male persistence toward graduation continue to be areas of difficulty. Ensuring these programs' long-term sustainability and demonstrating their

effectiveness is another critical hurdle. Institutions must provide data-driven evidence that these initiatives positively impact Black male students' experiences and outcomes, especially in an era of financial constraints and public scrutiny (Bridgeforth, 2019).

Change within higher education is often a slow process, especially when addressing deeply rooted issues like the persistence and retention of historically marginalized student populations. Effective leadership and strategic planning across all institutional levels are essential. Yet, the longstanding culture and administrative structures of PWIs can present challenges to diversity programs, particularly those aimed at improving the experiences and success of underrepresented students (Ovink & Murrell, 2022). For these programs to be successful, institutions must provide intentional, well-funded support that meets the academic and social needs of Black male students, creating environments where they can thrive both academically and socially.

As colleges and universities continue to report low retention rates for Black male students, practitioners and scholars have turned their attention to understanding and addressing these challenges. Gender disparities are evident; for instance, Black males make up only 36% of all Black undergraduate enrollments compared to their female counterparts (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2005). Ultimately, programs that offer pre-college academic enrichment and exposure to campus life play a vital role in addressing these gaps by equipping students with the skills needed for success. However, some institutions may not feel obligated to invest in such pre-college efforts, a mindset that may contribute to ongoing retention challenges.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to explore the effectiveness of student support retention programs, particularly summer bridge programs, for Black males at

predominantly White institutions (PWIs). By utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data, this study will examine the experiences of Black male undergraduates who participated in these programs to determine what they gained from their involvement and how it influenced their academic growth, personal development, and overall success during college. Additionally, the research will assess Black students' perspectives on how these programs enhanced their adjustment to college life and contributed to their persistence toward graduation.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions: 1) How do summer bridge programs focused on Black males affect their transition from high school to college and overall retention at a PWIs? 2) What motivates Black males to persevere on to graduation at PWIs? And 3) How do summer bridge programs play a role in the increasing engagement of Black males at PWIs?

Definitions

Adjustment: The ability of students to adapt to the academic and social demands of college life. It includes factors such as academic preparedness and social integration (Tinto, 1993; Woldoff et al., 2011)

Attrition: A reduction in student enrollment caused by a decline in retention, typically when students drop out or stop out (Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education, n.d.).

Belonging: A student's perception of being accepted, valued, and included within the college community. A sense of belonging is critical for both social integration and academic persistence, especially for underrepresented students (Strayhorn, 2012).

Black: For this study, the term "Black" is used to describe participants who may identify as African, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino, or other Black ethnic identities (Oxford English Dictionary, 2022).

Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP): Founded in 1986, The purpose of the CSTEP program is to increase the number of historically underrepresented minorities and economically disadvantaged undergraduate and graduate students who complete pre-professional or professional education programs that lead to professional licensure and careers in math, science, technology, and health-related fields (New York State Education Department, 2022).

Graduation: The completion of a required course of study in a college or university (Hagedorn, 2006).

Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP): Established in 1969 by New York State, HEOP provides academic and financial support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds who show the potential for success in higher education but do not meet traditional admissions standards (New York State Education Department, 2022).

Persistence: A student metric that refers to the continued enrollment of a student until graduation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

Predominantly White Institution (PWI): An institution of higher learning where White students account for 50% or more of the student body (Lomotey, 2010).

Pseudonyms: Pseudonyms are fictitious names assigned to individuals in research to protect their privacy and confidentiality. These names are used to ensure that the identities of the participants remain anonymous in a study's reporting of findings (Oxford English Dictionary, 2022).

Retention: An institutional metric that tracks the ability of an institution to keep students enrolled from year to year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

Summer Bridge Program: A pre-college program designed to assist underrepresented students in transitioning from high school to college by focusing on academic preparedness and social integration (Bir & Myrick, 2015).

Significance of the Study

Black males remain one of the least retained groups in higher education, especially at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Heaven, 2015). While there has been research on the retention of Black male students, there is limited focus on how summer bridge programs specifically affect their transition from high school to college and their overall retention. Additionally, little attention has been given to understanding what motivates Black males to persist toward graduation at PWIs or how summer bridge programs foster their engagement within these institutions.

This study aims to fill these gaps by examining the effects of summer bridge programs on the retention, progression, and graduation rates of Black males. The findings can provide valuable insights for campus leaders and administrators seeking to improve retention strategies, particularly for Black male students and other at-risk populations. Institutions without existing retention initiatives can also use the results to inform the development of tailored programs, such as summer bridge programs, that support the learning and development of Black male undergraduates.

Organization of the Research Report

This chapter introduced the purpose of this mixed-methods study, which was to explore the effectiveness of student support retention programs, particularly summer bridge programs,

for Black males at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). It also included key definitions to help readers better understand the research. This chapter has set the foundation for the subsequent sections of the study.

       Chapter 2 will provide a comprehensive literature review, examining existing research on retention, persistence, and the role of support programs in the academic success of Black male students at PWIs. Chapter 3 will outline the study's mixed-methods research design and methodology, including data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 will present the findings, drawing from both qualitative and quantitative data, and will connect these findings to existing literature. Finally, Chapter 5 will offer conclusions, address the implications for practice, provide recommendations for future research, and offer answers to the study's research questions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following is a review of literature focusing on how student support retention programs, particularly summer bridge programs (from high school to college), impact traditional college-age Black males at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). There has been an insufficient amount of focus on how summer transition programs are tailored to aid the transition from high school to college for Black males. Nor has there been substantial research on the impact that student support programs have on engaging Black males at PWIs (Haywood et al., 2016). Through this study, research will show whether participation in a rigorous, intense summer bridge program had a significant effect on the academic success of Black males in terms of retention, progression, and graduation. This chapter will give an overview of the literature by first looking at the history of issues for Blacks in the United States, institutional culture, and climate and then analyzing retention at colleges and universities and their impact on retention.

History of Issues for Blacks in the United States

In order to approach the topic of retention from a comprehensive perspective, it is crucial to first acknowledge and comprehend the multifaceted challenges that Black individuals encounter within the United States. By contextualizing the existing literature within this broader framework, we can ensure a more accurate and nuanced analysis of the subject matter. *Brown v. Board of Education* was a landmark decision in the civil rights movement because it established the principle that "separate but equal" systems of education and other services were inherently unequal. (Klarman, 1994). As part of the celebrations for the 60th anniversary of Brown v. Board of education, Strayhorn and Johnson (2014) studied survey data from 1,227 Black and White college students to learn more about the type and frequency of inter-racial contacts and how they

influence students' feeling of community. The sample consisted of 597 African American students and 630 Caucasian students, resulting in a total of 1,227 participants in the CSEQ survey. In the examined sample, it was observed that a significant proportion of Black students identified as female, constituting 65% of the total population. Because more Black people could now enroll in racially integrated secondary schools, that case in many ways laid the groundwork for more diversity on college campuses. The research found that although racial diversity was present, it did not automatically amount to frequent or meaningful cross-racial interactions among the student population (Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014). While it was difficult for them to connect with other Black students or groups while attending PWIs, researchers discovered that Black students are forced to interact across racial and cultural boundaries, even when it is difficult. (Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014).

In order to determine the frequency and character of inter-racial encounters as well as their impact on college student's sense of belonging, Waite (2001) highlighted that one of the first colleges (Oberlin College) in the United States to adopt a policy in 1834 that allowed students to be admitted regardless of race. Prior to the Civil war, opportunities for Americans to get an education were not readily available and were close to nonexistent for Blacks (Waite, 2001). In actuality, learning to read and write at that time was still against the law for Black people. Although Oberlin College was the first college from its founding that allowed Black men and women to enroll, they didn't graduate their first Black student until 1844, which was George B Vashon, who was one of the first Black faculty members at Howard University (Waite, 2001). Around 70 percent of Oberlin's Black graduates went into the profession of education, according to Waite (2001). Despite Oberlin College setting the precedent of being one of the first schools to allow Blacks to enroll in their school, they later fell victim to segregation and allowed those

racist practices to undo a lot of the educational progress for Blacks. The article concluded that leaders at Oberlin revised their founding principles, which worked to limit access for Black students (Waite, 2001). An Oberlin professor was cited in the article saying that "if the problem of the white and colored race cannot be worked out in Oberlin, a place dedicated almost at its birth to the cause of emancipation, it cannot be worked out in the nation at large" (p.364). Instead of continuing down the path as a pioneer in the field of education for all in a time period where that was unheard of, Oberlin instead contributed to educational segregation.

When discussing issues for Blacks in the U.S., it's important to understand the role racism has historically played, particularly in education. The conceptual framework guiding this study is rooted in Dr. Terrell Strayhorn's (2012) theory of belonging and Dr. Tara Yosso's (2005) Cultural Wealth Model. Together, these frameworks provide a theoretical grounding for examining the experiences of Black students navigating predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and highlight the unique assets these students bring into these spaces. Strayhorn's theory emphasizes that belonging is a fundamental human need, especially vital for students of color who often face environments that may not fully validate their identities. This need for belonging is closely tied to a student's motivation and persistence; for Black students, this sense of belonging directly impacts their academic success and retention. Strayhorn argues that educational institutions must be intentional about creating inclusive spaces that welcome diverse backgrounds, countering the barriers that have historically limited access for marginalized groups.

Complementing Strayhorn's work, Yosso's Cultural Wealth Model redefines how educators perceive the cultural assets of students from marginalized backgrounds. Yosso challenges deficit-based perspectives by identifying six forms of capital—aspirational, linguistic,

familial, social, navigational, and resistant—that equip students with unique skills and resilience. For instance, navigational capital enables Black students to adapt and thrive within environments that may feel exclusionary, while resistant capital empowers them to persist against adversity. By recognizing these forms of capital, institutions can shift from viewing Black students as "outsiders" to acknowledging the rich, multidimensional strengths they contribute. Together, Strayhorn's and Yosso's frameworks advocate for a more inclusive approach to education that centers belonging and leverages the cultural wealth of students of color, fostering environments that support their success and well-being (Strayhorn, 2012; Yosso, 2005).

In 2017, Boyd conducted pivotal research demonstrating the ongoing prejudice faced by Black males in higher education, both inside the classroom and across the campus. The study involved the identification and subsequent interviewing of participants, with the aim of exploring their personal encounters and perceptions pertaining to stereotypes within the college environment. Individual, semi-structured interviews gave participants a useful setting to thoroughly discuss their experiences with stereotypes. This highlighted the significant negative effects stereotypes have on college students' academic, social, and psychological well-being as well as their scholarly accomplishments. Boyd (2017) also found that the graduation rates for Black males were the lowest in both the four-year and six-year categories. For example, in 2004, the six-year graduation rate for Black males was just 44.3 percent, whereas the rate for White men was 61.4 percent (Boyd, 2017). Stereotypes result from the deeply ingrained nature and culture of racism in American society. President Barack Obama was quoted saying "we have more work to do when more young black men languish in prison than attend colleges and universities across America" (p. 890). In his conclusion, Boyd (2017) found that when Black males were paired with a Black peer, mentor, faculty or staff member, they were noticeably able

to persist at a higher rate. The research also showed that joining black student organizations/groups proved helpful when trying to persist through the aforementioned stereotypes.

Institutional Culture and Climate

As a part of their study, Cabrera and colleagues (2016) examined the impact of the perceptions of prejudice and discrimination and how that can play a role in Black students adjusting to college. In order to best asses the perceived

 racial discrimination that participants in their study experienced, researchers used The Student Adjustment model which proposes that the student's institutional experiences manifest in two distinct domains: the social domain, which encompasses informal interactions with students and faculty members, and the academic domain, which encompasses both academic interactions with faculty, staff, and other students (Cabrera, et. al. 2016). The sample for this study comprised a total of 1,454 participants, with 1,139 identifying as White and 315 as Black/African American. Building on the need to understand the intricacies of racial dynamics in educational settings, the study posits the following: "Perceptions of racial prejudice and discrimination on campus and in the classroom are expected to have a direct impact on withdrawal decisions… and (their) experiences at the institution" (p. 139). According to the findings of this research project, minority students' academic and intellectual growth, as well as their social experiences and dedication to their educational institutions, were severely impacted when they experienced discriminatory actions. Despite the fact that various impacts were seen for minority and nonminority pupils, it was found that exposure to discriminatory conduct had a negative impact on the cognitive and emotional development of all students (Cabrera et. al., 2016).

Twelve black male students at a PWI were interviewed by Robertson and Chaney (2017), and their responses revealed two main themes: first, racism and racial microaggressions were prevalent on campus, and second, the Black student experience was not valued by faculty and administration. The participants in this study ranged in age from 18 to 23 years old and were predominantly from middle class socioeconomic backgrounds. It is worth noting that five participants reported annual household incomes in the range of $40k-$65k, while the remaining seven participants identified themselves as coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, with incomes in the range of $20-$30k. According to the authors, when classroom material specifically matches black students' interests, their academic success significantly improves (Robertson & Chaney, 2017). When black students join groups or organizations, such as Black Student Association (BSA), they often "serve as conduits for socioeconomic upward mobility by aiding in the establishment of critical social networks/social capital facilitating community" (p. 264). Navigating through their first year of college proved to be a challenge for the black males who took part in this study because while dealing with the transition into a new space, they also had to deal with microaggressions on numerous occasions. The authors concluded that to negate this, universities are encouraged to provide more institutional support and create a more inclusive environment for these students (Robertson & Chaney, 2017).

Haywood and Sewell (2016) completed a qualitative study that looked at the difficulties faced by low-income Black men who struggled academically in their first year of college at a PWI. Researchers conducted interviews with 62 Black male students, who ranged in age from 18-20, who were also recipients of the Pell Grant, a federal financial aid program. The rationale behind selecting Pell Grant recipients as participants was based on the assumption that their eligibility for the grant reflects their socioeconomic background, which allowed for an

examination of the interplay between race, gender, and class among the study's participants. A participant of the study voiced in an interview, "personally, I felt like why should I care if nobody else cared… I was trying at the first of the semester, but when I realized I was on my own, I just didn't care anymore" (p.119). All groups on campus, including African American males, want to feel like they belong, and the results of this study imply that this desire is especially high for this population. (Haywood & Sewell, 2016). When considering the success of this set of students, institutions must take into consideration a number of factors, including involving and educating parents (or legal guardians) and enrolling students in programs that create community for these students. The authors concluded that there is a need for these students to be assisted with their transition from high school to college, even more so when they are coming from low socioeconomic status (Haywood & Sewell, 2016).

Strayhorn and colleagues (2015) conducted a mixed methods study in order to determine the association between a person's sense of belonging and well-being indicators and their confidence in their ability to transfer to college. The study included 18 Black male college students who engaged in a four-day early arrival program to enhance academic, professional, and leadership abilities for a smooth university transition. Out of the 18 students, four reported growing up in urban areas, whereas the rest grew up in suburban locales. They interviewed participants individually and collectively. They also conducted pre and post-surveys as well. The researchers highlighted three key themes from their study; the first was the institutional climate, the second was support from peers and faculty/staff and lastly was how their sense of belonging directly impacted their success in college (Strayhorn et. al., 2015). Researchers also found a direct correlation between the amount of confidence the students displayed while transitioning to college and their sense of belonging (Strayhorn et. al., 2015). They also found that something as

small as having administrators, mentors, or other leaders in their life voicing to the incoming first-year students that they are 'college ready' and other positive affirmations like, 'you will be successful' can help with their sense of belonging as well as their confidence.

Tara Yosso's Cultural Wealth Model (2005) provides a framework that challenges the traditional deficit thinking regarding students from marginalized backgrounds, particularly students of color. Instead of viewing these students as lacking the necessary skills or resources to succeed, Yosso's model highlights the various forms of capital that they inherently bring with them. These include aspirational capital, which refers to the students' dreams and hopes despite societal barriers; familial capital, which refers to the cultural knowledge nurtured within a family; and social capital, which is built through networks of people and community resources. Yosso's model suggests that when higher education institutions, such as PWIs, recognize and tap into these forms of capital, programs like summer bridge programs can be more effective. By leveraging the students' cultural wealth, these programs can help students better navigate the academic and social demands of college, thus aiding in retention and promoting a sense of belonging.

According to the latest research, better integration into campus life is linked to a smoother college adjustment for Black students. To investigate this further, Woldoff and his team conducted three distinct focus groups consisting of Black students from various demographic backgrounds. The first group was composed of six in-state Black students from West Virginia, while the second group included nine out-of-state Black students. The third group was a mix of five students—three in-state and two out-of-state—culminating in a total of 19 participants. Significantly, the researchers specifically chose out-of-state Black students originating from neighborhoods with a high Black population, averaging 83.3% (Woldoff et al.,

2011). This choice was particularly poignant given that, according to demographic data for West Virginia counties, only 19.4% of the local student population is Black (Woldoff et al., 2011). Contrary to the commonly held belief that race alone fosters unity among Black students at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), the study unearthed that students' diverse backgrounds and identities based on their hometowns actually contribute to divisions within the Black student body (Woldoff et al., 2011). Furthermore, Woldoff and colleagues (2011) found that successful retention of Black students hinges on more than just academic programs; a sense of belonging within the university's broader social fabric is equally vital for their academic success and well-being. As the authors described, "Black undergraduates attending PWIs not only face challenges academically but must also learn to adjust to an educational system that is… largely run by Whites for Whites" (p. 1051). The findings concluded that if universities want to increase retention of the African American presence on campus, it is important to develop programs to encourage student integration (Woldoff et. al., 2011).

Ovink and Murrell (2022) conducted a five-year study that involved 36 focus groups with 144 MSU undergraduates. The study comprised men and women from several ethnic origins, including White, Black, Latino, Asian, and American. The purpose of the focus groups was to get a better understanding of what students' perspectives are when it comes to what their colleges' DEI goals are. When discussing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, the author discussed one of the issues that plague colleges nationwide; that is *belonging*. "Although cultivating a sense of belonging during college—described as a feeling of *mattering*, or importance—provides benefits, not all students experience campus in the same way… belongingness is not static, can be difficult to measure and may vary by domain" (p. 3). Part of the issue must deal with the long-standing culture, administration, and structures of PWIs and

how they pose a challenge to diversity programs, particularly those aimed at enhancing the experience and retention of historically underprivileged students (Ovink & Murrell, 2022). According to the results of this research, despite significant challenges to its credibility as a supportive, DEI-focused place, the institution may be eager to express DEI as a community value but not entirely dedicated to real measures. Generally, the participants felt they were left to their own devices to form communities, and that their complaints were not being taken seriously by management (Ovink & Murrell, 2022).

Retention at Colleges and Universities

According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) (2022), of the 2.3 million who entered college for the first time in the fall of 2020, "75 percent persisted on to graduation. Out of that 75 percent of students, 66.4 percent graduated at the college they began at and 8.6 percent transferred out but graduated elsewhere" (p. 2). This annual report helps institutions understand trends and disparities by "multiple identifying factors and student demographic characteristics such as age and race and ethnicity" (p. 8). The persistence and retention rates are still lower than they were before the pandemic, notwithstanding this year's (2020) gains. The numbers in the report led to the conclusion that there are still significant racial and ethnic disparities, with a 28-percentage point difference between the top and lowest persistence rates.

Stewart, Lim, and Kim (2015) explored whether required placement in remedial courses predicts persistence at a public research institution. To do this, the authors considered factors related to both academic achievements before and after college. This survey included 3,213 degree-seeking freshmen aged 17-21, including full-time and part-time. The research had a primarily White/Non-Hispanic student population (75.5%), with 6.2% African American/Non-

Hispanic, 7.8% American Indian/Alaska Native, 6.0% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 4.5%

Hispanic. According to demographic data analyzed by Stewart and colleagues (2015), minority

students have lower persistence rates and are more likely to drop out of college than students

from any other group. The study's implications show that support services including tutoring,

mentorship, counseling, early intervention programs, and financial aid help will improve the

academic deficits of study participants and boost perseverance after the first year (Stewart et. al.,

2015). As recognized by most researchers, it was found that high school grades were viable

predictors of whether a student would persist in college. The results showed that typical college

students were more likely to continue than students who were required to attend obligatory

remedial education because they were intellectually prepared to pursue college-level curriculum

(Stewart et. al., 2015).

DeAngelo and Frankie (2016) completed a study using nationally representative data to

investigate whether students' social backgrounds and access to financial resources for higher

education have a distinct effect on them depending on their level of preparedness for college.

The study used data from the University of California, Los Angeles. The data set comes from

two primary sources: the 2004 Freshman Survey (TFS) from HERI's Cooperative Institutional

Research Program (CIRP) and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). The 2004 TFS/NSC

data set used in this study includes 210,056 full-time, first-time students from 356 four-year

colleges and institutions, weighted for national representation. The results show that college

preparedness is important and that less prepared students are more likely to drop out of college in

their first year, regardless of their parent's income or generational background in higher

education (DeAngelo & Frankie, 2016). Another critical finding that DeAngelo and Frankie

(2016) found was the fact that when a student had a large amount of grants, it didn't mitigate the

disadvantage that most low-income students face. When it came to loans, DeAngelo and Frankie (2016) found that if students had any loan amount, it proved to be detrimental to the first-year retention for low-income students but on the other hand, they also found that having loans motivated students to persist on to graduation. In fact, it was found that students from low-income families had lower retention rates by the end of their first year, regardless of funding (grants or loans) (DeAngelo & Frankie, 2016). Ultimately, socioeconomic status has a clear impact on students, and poorly prepared students face a greater financial disadvantage than their more prepared peers when they first enroll in college.

Allen, Robbins, Casillas, and Oh (2007) investigated how academic performance, levels of motivation, and levels of social connectivity influenced third-year students' propensity to stay in school, transfer, or drop out. The study examined how the relationship between motivation and social connection, they used first-year academic achievement as a mediator and examined whether the impacts are direct, indirect, both, or neither. Their study sample consisted of 6,872 students attending one of 23 schools or institutions that provide four-year degrees. Many people may wonder what's the purpose of studying third-year enrollment, especially since the majority of researchers focus on solely first-year retention, but in actuality, third-year enrollment gives you a more realistic outlook on student engagement and retention (Allen, et. al., 2007). The researchers discovered that academic performance has significant effects on the probability of staying in college or transferring but did not have an impact on third-year enrollment numbers (Allen, et. al., 2007). Contrary to Allen and colleagues' (2007) expectation, the effect sizes were insignificant in comparison to the correlation first-year academic performance had on persisting to graduation. Ultimately, self-discipline in academics led to improved academic performance in

their first year, which in turn had a dampening influence on whether students stayed in school or transferred.

Student athlete retention rates. Whenever student retention is discussed, student-athlete retention is typically looked at due to athletics historically having better retention numbers when compared to the overall university's number. Harrison (2011) conducted a study to investigate the extent to which incoming first-year student-athletes participate in academically valuable activities on campus. For this study,147 first-year student-athletes from four big Division 1-A schools were questioned (both those who brought in revenue and those who didn't). The study participant demographics included 58% White, 37% Black, and 5% Other Ethnicities. Some of the ethnicities that made up the 5% included American Indian, Asian American, Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, Other Latino, and others Harrison (2011). In early fall, academic team sessions were held to complete an online questionnaire for each participant. The questionnaire covered several aspects of the participants' experiences while enrolled in college and also included Likert-type items to assess student-athletes' campus community engagement, academic self-concept, and leadership qualities. Finding a comfortable balance between academic and athletic pursuits can be challenging for student-athletes in transition, who must constantly manage the complexities of their multiple identities. Harrison (2011) found that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) had rules that limit the amount of time that student-athletes can spend in supervised practice and training to 20 hours per week during the season and eight hours per week during the off-season. Additionally, these rules limit the number of student-athletes who can live in the same residence hall room. In spite of these efforts, a considerable number of student-athletes competing in high-profile sports such as football and men's basketball at Division I universities continue to graduate at rates that are much lower than

their non-athlete counterparts (Harrison, 2011). The findings revealed that establishing

relationships with members of the campus community can be challenging for certain student-

athletes, particularly if the members of the campus community hold biased attitudes towards the

intellectual capacity of the student-athletes (i.e. the perception that athletes don't do their own

homework) (Harrison, 2011). Harrison (2021) suggested that coaches should promote one-year

scholarships with the possibility of renewal, to show the importance of the balance of academic

and athletic responsibilities held by many student-athletes. With the way the system is set up

right now, athletic scholarships can be taken away based on a student's level of athletic skill,

which effectively gives priority to the athletic role.

Comeaux and Harrison (2011) proposed a conceptual model that would assist the general

public to better understand and explain the processes and characteristics that influence athlete

retention for student-athletes. The model aims to explain the dynamics that contribute to student-

athlete academic achievement, widely defined as matriculation and graduation from a program of

study. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) examined student-athlete experiences to determine how

athletic subculture, commercialization of college sports, and academic engagement strategies

impact academic success. The concept assumes that a student-athlete's academic success relies

on individual traits and dispositions, with influences from social and academic systems. The

research team summarized that although multiple factors influenced student-athlete success and

retention while at college "the most significant precollege characteristics associated with college

success are family background, educational experiences, and preparation" (p. 39). The results

showed that male football and basketball players had lower grade point averages and graduation

rates than athletes from other sports. Black student-athletes were shown to have the lowest levels

of academic preparedness and to originate mostly from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, according to research by Comeaux and Harrison (2011).

      Black athlete retention. Exploratory research was conducted by Turner, Southall, and Eckard (2015) where the purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which graduation rates changed between male players participating in football and basketball and male students who did not participate in those sports. The survey included 60 universities from the NCAA D-I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). Graduation gaps were calculated by comparing cohorts and reported as negative or positive. In addition to this, the writers focused special attention on the disparities in graduation rates that exist for African American male athletes competing in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). It was also important to note that for Division-I basketball teams, "Black athletes now account for nearly 61 percent of participants" (p. 2). The issue resurfaced when data from the University of Pennsylvania showed that these players had a graduation rate 22% lower than the general undergraduate population and 5% lower than Black male freshman (Turner et. al., 2015). The authors of this study concluded that their results "clearly demonstrate negative graduation gaps exist between Black male basketball and football players and full-time students" (p.17). This information proves to be imperative especially since there are many who believe athletes are typically retained at a higher rate than traditional students due to the rigorous schedule they are required to follow, and this study was able to prove that this wasn't the case.

      Taking a step back from collegiate sports, Harris, and colleagues (2014) completed a qualitative study that focused on the academic engagement and success of Black male student-athletes in high school. The authors interviewed two black male athletes and used their answers about who mattered to them to recruit the rest of their participants. That sample consisted of ten

individuals: one principal, two school counselors, two instructors, one coach, two parents, and two varsity athletes. Prior to attending college, it is vital for Black male athletes in high school to be performing well in their classes, while at the same time preparing for college. Even before that, they must understand the entire college admissions process, which includes the financial aid process, testing requirements (if any), understanding tuition costs, and overall, being able to decide through options (Harris et. al., 2014). The authors ultimately concluded that "it is critical for all education stakeholders to work collaboratively to advocate for all high school students, particularly historically disenfranchised groups" (p. 192). The findings, in essence, embody the saying 'it takes a village', as it will take a collaborative effort from parents, principals, admissions counselors, and coaches (at both levels), in order to make a significant impact on the lives of these Black male student-athletes.

Prior to the NCAA approving the Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) policy, which allows all NCAA D1, D2, and D3 student-athletes to be compensated (NCSA, 2023), there were limited opportunities for athletes to make money while playing sports in college. Murty, Roebuck, and McCamey (2014) did a study that examined how Black student-athletes were victims of race and class exploitation. The data pool for this investigation was extensive. The study aimed to examine race and class exploitation of black student athletes at primarily white universities from the 1960s to 2010. This study examined the portrayal and analysis of Black Student Athletes in sports research literature from 1960 to 2010 and the researchers' personal observations and interactions with them. The authors focused on six different kinds of race and class exploitation but the one that will be highlighted in this review is economic exploitation (Murty et. al., 2014). White student-athletes have substantially lower dropout rates and much better graduation rates than black student-athletes. The researchers found that "football and basketball Black student-

athletes have the lowest graduation rates of any black student-athletes—49 percent and 42 percent respectively" (p. 164). The findings concluded that although Black student-athletes were retained at a lesser rate than their white counterparts when it came to basketball and football, a focus should be put on career development. This way, they will be able to develop a sense of self and the realization that less than .1 percent of student-athletes make it to play professional basketball or football (Murty et. al., 2014).

Black male retention. In the realm of higher education, the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (JBHE) published a notable study in 1997 that counters the prevailing notion that African American students admitted under affirmative action are ill-equipped to succeed academically at elite institutions. The study showcased statistics indicating generally high graduation rates for Black students at some of the nation's top universities and liberal arts colleges. However, the data also revealed areas for concern. For instance, Oberlin College, one of the nation's leading liberal arts schools, exhibited a notable gap in graduation rates: 67% for Black students as compared to 81% for their white counterparts, marking a 14% disparity (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 1997). While Harvard had the highest percentage of graduates at 95 percent, a 2 percent difference from their white students, who were at 97 percent (JBHE, 1997). Even though the lowest graduation rate among black males was still greater than the national average, leading the author to the conclusion that something is working at our country's top universities.

In 2019, Bridgeforth led a study at a large, research-intensive public university in the southeastern United States, which predominantly consisted of white students among its 13,000-strong student body. The study included 159 participants, 60% of whom were female and 40% male. Racial demographics revealed that 61% were Caucasian, 25% were African American,

with the remainder representing other ethnicities. The study investigated if African American males at PWIs reported more targeting than Caucasian males and females across four areas: by professors, classmates, in class, and in residence halls. Bridgeforth's findings indicate that Black students at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) are most likely to experience prejudice, often leading to attrition. Researchers identified a key factor in low retention rates: the difficulty these students face in integrating into campus culture due to a sense of being misunderstood by peers and marginalized by faculty. The authors even discussed how Black students must endure having double consciousness, better known as code-switching. Being that Black males represent less than 5 percent, Bridgeforth (2019) concluded that the reason for the low numbers is that the campus environments at PWIs are simply not welcoming. The findings also mentioned that college administrators need to reevaluate their campus climate to establish a more caring, considerate atmosphere that is welcoming for everyone, including Black men.

Harper (2015) examined the ways in which Black male undergraduates at PWIs deal with and work to overcome the internalization of racial stereotypes. The researcher engaged in the process of conducting interviews with the participants in order to gather data. In addition, the researcher digitally recorded each interview session, ensuring the preservation of the participants' narratives in their original form. Furthermore, the researcher transcribed the recorded interviews, yielding over 4,500 pages of meticulously transcribed data. Harper (2015) also visited over 30 different colleges (private and public) and out of the 143 participants, only 2 people could not recollect at least one time when they encountered a racial stereotype. For clarity, the study subjects were high-achieving Black male undergraduates with GPAs above 3.0, leadership roles in student organizations, strong faculty/administrator relationships, participation in educational enrichment programs, and multiple merit-based scholarships and honors. "Stereotypes create

threatening environments for Black males on campus causing social, psychological, and academic effects of Black male collegiate success" (Boyd, 2017, p. 4). Although this study only focused on students with a 3.0 GPA or higher, Harper was still able to pull together valuable information from the selected group. Despite their status as academic achievers and renowned student leaders, Harper (2015) emphasized how participants remembered several instances in which White classmates and professors stereotyped them. One participant who went by the name Austin (as a pseudonym) said, "You would think that being vice president of the student body would provide some sort of protection from ignorance, but it doesn't. White people say dumb racist shit to me and ask me inappropriate and ignorant questions about Blacks all the time" (p. 658). Harper (2015) found that many of the white students on many of the campuses included in this study frequently made the incorrect assumptions that Black men could dance, knew where and how to get drugs, spoke in slang, knew the words to rap and hip-hop songs, always came from underfunded high schools and that they were athletically gifted. These students also believed that Black men always came from "the hood" (Harper 2015).

Palmer and colleagues used literature to develop a model of retention and persistence for Black men at Historically Black Colleges Universities (HBCU). The model consists of three sections: Pre-Entry, Enrollment and Persistence, and Optimizing Student Success. The study was specifically centered on Black men attending HBCUs and how they would develop a model of retention and persistence for this student demography, which was ultimately aimed to assist Black universities in decreasing attrition among Black male students. When thinking about retention of Black males at an HBCU, one may think that this wouldn't be worth researching, which may be the reason for the lack of research in this field. Researchers found the following:

According to an analysis of government data from 83 four-year HBCUs,

while 37% of all Black HBCU students graduate within six years, which is 4%

lower than the national graduation rate for Black students, only 29% of Black

men at Black colleges persist to degree completion within six years. Moreover, data from

the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) indicates that while the enrollment of Black

women is increasing at HBCUs, the percentage of Black men enrolled in Black colleges

is gradually declining. (p. 3)

Palmer and colleagues (2015) concluded that HBCUs had to do more in order to increase their

persistence rate, which included but was not limited to collaborating with community colleges to

make sure students were adequately prepared for college level courses, better relationships with

faculty and staff, as well as "creating a culture of engagement for Black males" (p. 13). The last

item proves to be essential and it is crucial that HBCUs concentrate on developing a culture that

encourages Black males' engagement, especially given that engagement on campus is linked to a

variety of outcomes, including academic and social integration (Tinto, 1993), psychological

development, cognitive development, moral and ethical development, and retention and

persistence (Boyd, 2017; Tinto, 1993).

Kim and Hargrove (2013) highlighted in their study that describes Black male resilience

while outlining significant advancements in the study of Black college men in PWIs. The article

delved into the internal and external drivers behind the participants' success and continued

engagement in STEM fields. Using a grounded theory approach to analyze data from

biographical questionnaires and both individual and group interviews, researchers found that

these men often employed a "prove-them-wrong" strategy as a coping mechanism. The authors

made mention of how Black men made up less than 6 percent of the entire U.S. undergraduate

population in 2010 (Kim and Hargrove, 2013). Part of the reason for this, as the researchers

described, was due to the deficit-informed language consistently used to portray Black men, which included making Black men out to be "incapable, unintelligent, disadvantaged and at-risk to fail at best" (p. 300). Essentially, the authors wanted to reframe how research was being conducted when it came to Black men, for instance, as opposed to examining the negative experiences these students face while attending PWIs, the author would rather highlight who the students persisted and excelled while at their institution. The researchers concluded from the literature that while it is inevitable that Black men continue to face trials and triumphs while attending PWIs, there will always be those who succeed in college, despite the odds not being in their favor (Kim and Hargrove, 2013).

Brooks and colleagues (2013) conducted a mixed-methods study that highlighted the contribution of retention initiatives to African American male students finishing their first year of college successfully. The researchers used an Explanatory Mixed Method design, or QUAN-qual model, focusing initially on quantitative data collection and analysis. They chose 136 African-American freshman male students to participate in the study after determining favorable qualities. 90 of the 136 participants fit the criteria the researchers put forth. Participants were selected based on three major characteristics: male gender, freshman university classification, and black/African American ethnicity/race. The outcomes of the research findings suggest that African American males have a strong desire to feel culturally connected and included, as any group on campus would naturally feel (Brooks et. al., 2013). The authors also pointed out the need for these students to be assisted with their transition from high school to college, even more so when they are coming from low socioeconomic status. Results from the study showed that Black male participants "stated having stronger relationships with mentors, better university academic acculturation and improved social integration into the university community" (p.

217).   The social and economic disparities concerned the researchers when it came to Black males, as they fear if the trend continues and nothing is done to remedy the situation, the future could show levels that are even lower than they are now.

Student Support Programs

In their seminal article, Heaven (2015) introduced a conceptual framework that captures the conceptual nature of initiatives that were put in place to aid with the adjustment issues that Black males typically experience when going to college. "Being involved in culturally based activities/organizations adds an additional comfort factor to the equation" (p. 58). We know that student involvement is critical whenever discussing retention. Mentoring was also mentioned as a way to provide support for Black males in college. The researchers argued that not only will it "enhance their educational journey" (p. 61), but it will also provide them with a meaningful example of how to navigate issues that they may be currently dealing with. Two mentoring groups were mentioned in the study, and they gave examples of how they provided leadership development, tutoring services, cultural activities, and more to their mentees (Heaven, 2015). The author concluded that in order to see a higher retention rate of Black males, student involvement has to be made a priority, mentoring programs need to be established, counseling needs to be mandated as well as career counseling. Heaven (2015) also noted that these alone will not force these students to complete college but will instead give them the motivation needed to persevere.

Thomas and colleagues (1998) conducted research on the graduation rates of students who participated in either of the three programs created by the Higher Education Amendments of 1968, which were: Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Special Services for Disadvantaged Students, also known as the "TRIO" programs. Much like the Higher Education Opportunity

Program (HEOP) (NYSED, n.d.), the TRIO programs had three major goals, which were increasing the college retention and graduation rate of students in their programs, increasing transfer rates of students from two to four-year institutions, and to foster a climate at the participating institution that supported low-income, first-gen and students with disabilities (Thomas et. al., 1998). The authors focused on the TRIO programs offered at Rutgers, due partly to the size of the campus (Rutgers Student Support Service Program, RSSSP) and how the network of integrated support services they had in place, impacted student retention and graduation (Thomas et. al., 1998). Research also pointed out how "many RSSSP participants are also eligible to receive much-needed services through state-supported NJEOF (New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund) programs" (p. 399) and that the initiatives offered by that program could not be supported by the limited RSSSP budget alone. Some of the initiatives offered by NJEOF include "a pre-freshman summer program and computer seminar, a Summer Study for Renewal Students (SSRS), academic advisement and counseling services" (p. 399). Thomas and Colleagues (1998) found that the average graduation rate for the cohort groups was 56.2 percent (which was above the standard for that time period) and the positive results were attributed to the presence of a network of support services programs that were funded by the federal government, individual states, and universities.

Summer bridge programs. It's important to understand the origin of summer bridge programs to have a better understanding of their importance. Kezar (2000) described how the aims and missions of support programs have been steadily broadening over the course of the past thirty years to accommodate international students, students who are unable to speak English, and students with handicaps. Earlier on in this chapter, we saw how Waite (2001) highlighted Oberlin College, as one of the first institutions in the United States to establish a policy in 1834

to allow people to enroll regardless of race. Kezar (2000) pointed out how higher numbers of women and African Americans enrolled in universities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and this prompted an increase in access-related initiatives at the time. In addition, aid programs were reintroduced to help these new populations afford higher education after the G.I. Bill and the civil rights struggle. In essence, summer bridge programs were an example of the kind of successful initiative that can be traced back to the many different waves of access to education. The author highlighted how summer bridge programs are thoughtfully crafted to strategically elevate the academic trajectory and future triumphs of historically marginalized students, thereby effectively diminishing the disparities that exist between them and their counterparts within conventional student populations. This includes the numerous positive aspects of participating in a summer bridge program, including academic help, career guidance, and even community service activities through which students may meet and get engaged with groups in the local college region (Kezar, 2000).

Slade, Eatmon, Staley, and Dixon (2015) covered the topic of planning and implementation of a comprehensive summer transition program at an HBCU that would improve academic readiness, self-efficacy, skills, and habits necessary for college success. Many students struggle to succeed in college because they are underprepared academically and otherwise. Part of this article involved highlighting a summer bridge program called, the Aggie Impact Scholars Program (AISP), which is North Carolina A&T (NCAT) State University's program (Slade et. al., 2015). Although NCAT is an HBCU, the additional support for this student population to be successful wasn't overlooked. The goals of AISP were to cover both the intellectual and social aspects of college life. In their efforts to navigate the complex web of requirements for graduating from college, African American students frequently face challenges that are more

severe and difficult to surmount due to a combination of educational, social, and economic issues (Slade et. al., 2015). While the primary goal of the program was to increase retention, persistence, and graduation among students who participated in it, the goal was for the students to ultimately develop skills and habits that are sharpened through the program structure (Slade et. al., 2015). Through the literature that Slade and colleagues (2015) reviewed, it was highlighted that many viewed the efforts of the AISP program as giving students an unrealistic expectation of what to expect when the semester began. Research also reveals that African American students attend postsecondary education in need of academic remediation and are more likely than White students to need development work, demonstrating the significance of enrolling them in the summer bridge program. (Slade et. al., 2015).

Bir and Myrick (2015) conducted a study that looked at whether African American male and female students enrolled in developmental education at an HBCU who participated in a demanding, intense summer bridge program fared academically better than nonparticipants in terms of retention, progression, and graduation. Similar to how Slade and colleagues (2015) focused on a specific summer bridge program, Bir and Myrick (2015) focused on a program called CHEER, which stood for, Creating Higher Expectations for Educational Readiness. The program ran for 4 -5 weeks and students took credit-bearing classes that included math and English. Data collected from 2008-2014 included 400 full-time freshmen (12+ credit hours) who were U.S. citizens under 20. A study of nine variables was conducted on three cohorts of students (2008, 2009, 2010). The participants took classes Monday through Friday and took part in trips and team-building activities over the weekend. Researchers also mentioned that the participants participated in competitive activities over the summer as well, such as basketball, dance competitions, swimming, and more (Bir & Myrick, 2015). The CHEER program has

numerous facets to it that researchers have found to be beneficial for African American Students, which include having a supportive environment, and academic and social mentors, and ties directly into the college's mission (Bir & Myrick, 2015). Although the study focused on both African American men and women, the findings regarding the retention of Black males were significant. Bir and Myrick (2015) concluded that when Black male and female students participate in an educational summer bridge program before the start of their fall semester of freshman year, they displayed better retention, higher GPAs, and improved graduation rates than those who did not participate in the summer bridge program.

Chapter Summary

Through the literature review, this chapter presented how history can explain why Black men are among the least retained groups of college undergraduates, even more so at PWIs (Heaven, 2015). Readers should now have a better understanding of the problem after looking at the history of issues for Blacks in college, institutional culture, and climate and then analyzing student support programs and their impact on retention. The issue is rooted so deeply in the educational system that summer bridge programs are even utilized at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to get Black students better equipped to deal with the transition from high school to college (Bir & Myrick, 2015; Palmer et. al., 2015; Slade et. al., 2015;). Although many universities are developing retention measures, the issue of Black male retention and graduation still exists. There has been an insufficient amount of focus in past studies on how summer transition programs are tailored to aid the transition from high school to college, for Black males specifically. Chapter three will describe the study's research methodology and methods.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this research is to gauge the impact of summer bridge programs on the academic and social experiences of traditional college-age Black males at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Three research questions guided the study: 1) How do summer bridge programs focused on Black males affect their transition from high school to college and overall retention at a PWIs? 2) What motivates them (Black males) to persevere on to graduation at PWIs? and 3) How do summer bridge programs play a role in the increasing engagement of Black males at PWIs? The research aims to provide both a statistical and narrative-based examination to fully assess these programs' influence.

This chapter is organized to expound on the mixed-methods and action research methodologies that are employed, delve into the research context, and explain the various methods for collecting and analyzing data. It begins by setting the stage with a detailed examination of the theoretical underpinnings that guide the dual-method framework, outlining how each method contributes uniquely to the holistic understanding of the research questions. The chapter then moves into a description of the data collection processes, including the tools and methods used for both qualitative and quantitative data gathering, as well as the reasons why those tools and methods were chosen.

Research Methodology

Mixed Methods

In line with the work of Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989), this research employs a mixed-methods approach. By combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, the study aims to provide a holistic perspective on the research problem. Creswell and Creswell (2018)

have argued that mixed methods bring the strength of both qualitative and quantitative data to address research questions more comprehensively. This is corroborated by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), who noted that mixed methods research allows for the "collection of multiple types of data" and "multiple ways of interpreting the data" (p. 16). Stahl and colleagues (2019) also highlighted that mixed methods research is often used when the research question is complex and multi-faceted, requiring insights from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives to be fully understood. It also provides a framework for explicitly defining the relationship between the qualitative and quantitative elements, enhancing the depth and rigor of the research.

The theoretical framework of this study is guided by Tara Yosso's Cultural Wealth Model and Terrell Strayhorn's Sense of Belonging. Yosso's model helps frame the interpretation of the qualitative data by acknowledging the various forms of capital—aspirational, familial, and social—that Black male students bring with them to college. This framework will be instrumental in understanding how the students' backgrounds and cultural wealth influence their experiences in summer bridge programs and their transition to college. Strayhorn's work on Sense of Belonging will guide the exploration of how summer bridge programs impact students' feelings of connectedness within predominantly White institutions (PWIs). This is particularly crucial as Sense of Belonging is directly linked to student retention and success. By using these frameworks, the study will examine how these programs not only help with academic preparation but also create a supportive environment that fosters belonging and utilizes students' existing strengths.

Sequential Mixed Methods

The study employs an explanatory sequential design, which involves initially collecting quantitative data through surveys and then following up with qualitative data via semi-structured

interviews to further interpret the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative phase, consisting of surveys, measured key factors related to student success and retention, including academic preparedness, social integration, and a sense of belonging as defined by Strayhorn (2012). By gathering qualitative and quantitative data concurrently, as opposed to successively, a synchronous snapshot of the students' experiences was obtained, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of the summer bridge programs' perceived effects. This method had the benefit of ensuring that the results accurately represented the student's current circumstances without being distorted by possible time-lapsed recall. Additionally, it provided the flexibility to explore new themes that emerged from the quantitative data, enabling the research to adapt to findings in real-time, a core principle of action research that emphasizes the importance of responsiveness in research methodologies (Herr & Anderson, 2015)

By utilizing an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the study guarantees that the intricacy involved in assessing educational programs is adequately addressed. Yosso's and Strayhorn's frameworks offer a valuable perspective for both evaluating the success of these programs through quantitative measures and gaining deeper insight into the nuanced, lived experiences of Black males as they transition from high school to college, as researchers Caraballo and colleagues (2017), highlighted.

Action Research

Action research, as discussed by Herr and Anderson (2015), is a methodology that combines academic rigor with practical problem-solving. It promotes the idea that research can lead to immediate changes in policy or practice, making it ideal for educational settings (Mertler, 2019). The fact that action research involves educators collaborating and conversing with one another in empowering ways is a significant advantage. In this case, the research significantly

relies on action research pedagogy as a result of its cyclical structure comprising planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, as well as its emphasis on community engagement.

Participatory Action Research

The specific type of action research utilized in this study is participatory action research. Given the topic of this research study, it will incorporate key principles of youth participatory action research as outlined by Caraballo et al. (2017), emphasizing the importance of engaging young people as partners in the research process. The focus on participatory action research also aligns with the work of Burke and Hadley (2018), who explored how this methodology can empower youth through better connections and critical literacy. The decision to employ participatory action research is in alignment with the study's aims to empower participants by acknowledging their voices as it is central to the research process. The effectiveness of summer bridge programs for Black male students at PWIs is the focus of this study, making this technique particularly relevant in a setting where the viewpoints and experiences of the students themselves are significant.

The use of participatory action research is also beneficial to the researcher, as it provides a deeper immersion into the participants' world, which can lead to more empathetic and informed interpretations of the data. It also opens up opportunities for the researcher to engage in reflective practice, a core component of action research that is crucial for continuous learning and development in the field of education (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Survey Research

In the current study, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through a survey instrument, leveraging the method's capacity to "evaluate programs and collect data over time or at a single point in time to assess the characteristics of a target population" (Groves, 2011, p.

863). Surveys provide a systematic and scientific approach for collecting data from a specific population, which in this study encompasses traditional college-age Black males at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Surveys were chosen for their flexibility, allowing participants to respond at their convenience, which is particularly important given the busy schedules of college students. This method also aligns with the evolving landscape of survey research that increasingly accommodates online and mobile platforms, extending the reach and accessibility for participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since students are frequently more accustomed to using digital means of communication in educational contexts, the ability to complete surveys electronically is practical.

However, it's important to acknowledge potential limitations such as survey nonresponse, which can introduce bias and affect the representativeness of the data (Peytchev, 2013). By carefully designing the survey to include questions that resonate with the experiences of the participants and by using strategies familiar to the population that is being studied to mitigate nonresponse, the aim is to collect data that is both representative and rich in content.

Semi-Structured Video Interviews

This study also utilized semi-structured video interviews to gather qualitative data from participants. Given the digital native nature of the participant group, which consists of traditional college-age Black males attending PWIs, the use of video interviews seemed especially appropriate. According to Khan and MacEachen (2022), video interviews serve as a means of meeting the needs of participants who are geographically spread out while also capitalizing on the ease and familiarity that younger generations possess with digital communication platforms.

The decision to conduct interviews via video conferencing also reflects a consideration of the evolving nature of qualitative research in the age of technology. As Boellstorff et al. (2012)

discuss, virtual spaces offer unique opportunities for interaction that can yield rich ethnographic data. Semi-structured video interviews can also enhance the researcher's ability to observe non-verbal cues and reactions, despite not being in the same physical space as the interviewee (Khan & MacEachen, 2022). Additionally, this interview approach guarantees that participants can interact in an environment where they feel at ease, potentially enhancing their willingness to be open and facilitating the development of a strong rapport throughout the interviews. The ability to record visual information gives the participants' stories more depth, showing feelings and behaviors that might not be as clear in formal face-to-face or phone interviews.

Research Context

Research Setting

The research for this study was conducted in a virtual environment, capitalizing on the accessibility and flexibility offered by digital communication platforms. This study was conducted at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the Mid-Hudson Valley of New York, employing a practical action research design. The research design incorporates a two-pronged approach, an initial quantitative phase consisting of a survey, followed by a qualitative phase involving semi-structured interviews. For this paper, this PWI will be represented using the pseudonym, "Little Apple University" or LAU. The college setting, with its unique demographic makeup, provided an ideal location for examining the experiences of traditional college-age Black males. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)(n.d.), the total undergraduate enrollment at LAU is 1,542 students. Among these undergraduates, Black or African American students make up 8.4% of the population, which will represent the focus for this study's exploration of summer bridge programs and their effectiveness for this specific student group. Additionally, the enrollment data for Fall 2022 at LAU shows that

Hispanic/Latino students represent 24.7% of the student body, and White students account for 49.9%, reflecting the college's diverse makeup (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP)

LAU has a partnership with the New York State Education Department (NYSED) named the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), which is designed to support students from New York State who, due to academic and economic hardships, would otherwise be unable to pursue a college education (NYSED, 2023). HEOP at LAU is committed to facilitating the academic success, personal growth, and professional development of its participants. The program includes a mandatory summer bridge component for all participants of the program, which is integral to preparing students for the rigors of college life.

In the 2020-21 academic year, HEOP served a total of 4,324 students seeking bachelor's degrees (NYSED, 2022). In the same academic year, NYSED (2022) reported that 89.1% of enrolled HEOP students were students of color, with the total male enrollees being 1,746 (38%) and female enrollees 2,809 (62%), reflecting a significant representation of minority students who are the focus of this study. The retention rates for HEOP students are part of the reason this study was taken on, as the average retention rate from the first to the second year was 83.56% (NYSED, 2022). From the second to the third year it was 82%, and from the third to the fourth year it was 81%. These high retention rates further highlight the program's effectiveness in keeping students engaged and enrolled in their college.

Little Apple University's HEOP is essential to this study because it offers a structured support structure that may have an impact on Black male students' retention, starting with their summer bridge program experiences. The program's strong retention and graduation rates

suggest that it creates a positive environment for academic success, which this study aims to explore in relation to the college's Black male population.

Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP)

Another partnership that LAU has with NYSED is named the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP) and operates with the mission to increase the number of historically under-represented minorities and economically disadvantaged students in pre-professional or professional education programs leading to careers in STEM and health-related fields (NYSED, 2022). In the 2021-22 academic year, CSTEP enrolled 8,195 students across 58 programs in New York State, with a gender distribution of 31% male and 68% female students (NYSED. 2022). Out of the male distribution, 42% identified as Black and/or African-American and 39% were Hispanic or Latino.

The use of CSTEP participants in this research study is particularly due to its similarity to the HEOP program, as CSTEP supports students through various academic and professional development services. However, unlike HEOP students, CSTEP participants do not have a summer bridge program as a mandated prerequisite. This distinction makes CSTEP students a valuable comparison group for this study, which aims to assess the effectiveness of summer bridge programs offered by HEOP. By examining the outcomes of CSTEP participants, who receive support comparable to HEOP but without the summer bridge component, the study can better isolate the impact of the summer bridge program itself.

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Participant Recruitment and Selection

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Participants

Participants in this study are first-time college students, aged 18-20, Black male who are enrolled at Little Apple University, a predominantly white institution in the New York Mid-

Hudson Valley area represented by the pseudonym. For clarification, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (n.d.) defines "first-time college students" as individuals who are starting their first-ever college experience. It doesn't necessarily mean they have to be in their first year of college, as they could be in a different year but still be attending college for the first time. A group of ten students enrolled in the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) was identified through collaboration with the HEOP office, which provides crucial educational opportunities and support to students who, due to academic and economic barriers, might otherwise not have access to higher education (NYSED, 2023).

From this group, three students were randomly selected to participate in the study. The first group were participants were from Little Apple University's HEOP, which enrolls about 50 students, making the three participants from this group a feasible 3% sample of the total HEOP/CSTEP enrollment. Students were required to self-report their age, and a list of potential participants was then sent to the Director of the HEOP program to confirm their current enrollment, a prerequisite for inclusion in the study.

Simultaneously, a separate group of ten students from the CSTEP program at LAU, all identifying as Black but not participating in HEOP, was assembled similarly. From this cohort, three students were also chosen randomly. This method allowed for a comparative study of the experiences of students in HEOP versus those outside the program, offering a deeper insight into the impact of HEOP's summer bridge program. Table 1 below provides a participant profile, featuring self-reported academic data. It includes the participants' pseudonyms, their respective programs (HEOP or CSTEP), declared academic majors, cumulative GPAs on a 4.0 scale, and whether they are first-generation college students.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Program (HEOP or CSTEP)	Academic Major	Cumulative GPA (Out of 4.0)	First Generation College Student
Ali Hassan	HEOP	Business Management	2.75	Yes
Elijah Harper	HEOP	Marketing	2.7	Yes
Julian Ford	HEOP	IT Cyber Security	2.5	No
Isaac Coleman	CSTEP	Business Management	2.89	No
Marcus James	CSTEP	Healthcare Management	3.94	Yes
Nathan Rivera	CSTEP	Business Management	3	No

Note. Participant Isaac Coleman took a leave of absence after the Fall 2023 semester concluded due to personal reasons.

The recruitment plan was done with respect to the students' freedom and will to join. By ensuring voluntary participation and the ability to withdraw at any time, the study upheld ethical standards while also likely attracting participants who are motivated and engaged, a factor that can positively influence the quality of the data collected. As Chen (2015) highlighted, students' active and voluntary participation is anticipated to enrich the study, aligning with the principles of practical action research that values engaged and intentional involvement by participants.

The overall selection was intended to facilitate a comparative analysis between students involved in HEOP and those solely in CSTEP. The distinct arrangement of having both HEOP and CSTEP programs under a single Director presented an opportunity that the researcher was able to utilize. The most compelling feature of utilizing the HEOP/CSTEP office for participant recruitment is the contrasting experiences of the two groups of students. While HEOP students participate in a summer bridge program designed to smooth the transition to college life, CSTEP

students do not go through such a program. However, both groups benefit from the comprehensive academic and social support offered by the HEOP/CSTEP office throughout their college journey. This unique setup provides an excellent opportunity to compare the experiences of the two groups, offering insights into the effectiveness of summer bridge programs.

By comparing these two student experiences, the research aims to discern whether the summer bridge program's goals, enhanced academic performance, increased retention rates, and improved social integration, are indeed met or if these outcomes are achievable solely through the continuous support provided by offices like the HEOP/CSTEP office at LAU. This approach is supported by action research methodologies that call for context-specific, participant-centered research designs (Mertler, 2019).

Participants were required to sign the informed consent form electronically before returning it via email, indicating their voluntary agreement to partake in the study. This procedure ensured that participants had the opportunity to consider their involvement without pressure and had the option to ask questions or withdraw at any time. All returned consent forms were stored securely, separate from the study data, to maintain the confidentiality and integrity of the research process. The collection and storage of consent forms, as outlined in the study's appendix, were conducted in compliance with ethical research standards and institutional guidelines.

To ensure the confidentiality of our participants, all individuals will be referred to by pseudonyms throughout the study. This measure is in place to protect their privacy and to maintain the ethical standards of research as set forth by our institution's review board and the American Psychological Association's (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (2020). The selection process was carefully designed to ensure that participants were

representative of the broader population of Black students at the college (see Table 1). By doing so, the study aims to provide insights that are generalizable to this group within the context of PWIs.

Table 2

Number (n) of Black or African American Students at LAU

	Number of overall Students	n	% of overall population
Little Apple University	1,918	123	8%
HEOP Program at LAU	50	10	20%
CSTEP Program at LAU	75	23	31%

The demographics of Little Apple University are detailed in Table 2, which showcases the enrollment numbers and the representation of Black or African American students within the overall student body and specific programs. The university's total enrollment stands at 1,918 students, of which 123 are Black or African American, accounting for 8% of the student population. In the programs used in the study, the HEOP (Higher Education Opportunity Program) at Little Apple University serves 50 students, with Black or African American students making up 20% of the program's demographics. Meanwhile, the CSTEP (Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program) at Little Apple University enrolls 75 students, with a significant representation of Black or African American students at 31%.

The data reflects that there are only 10 Black men within the HEOP Program as reported by the school's demographic records (see Table 2). However, it's important to recognize potential variation in how students may self-identify. While the institutional data shows 10 Black

men in the HEOP Program, this count could differ based on individual self-definitions of racial identity. To address this, I included a specific description of "Black" in my recruitment letter, which may have helped clarify this identity criterion for potential participants. This approach aimed to reduce ambiguity and ensure that participants understood how "Black" was defined for the purposes of this study, though self-identification could still vary slightly from the school's demographic data.

Researcher Positionality

My connection to this study, the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) and to the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP) is both personal and professional. As an alumnus of the HEOP program and having served in a directorial capacity for both HEOP and CSTEP, I occupy a unique vantage point. Having experienced the program from both the student and the staff perspective shapes my understanding of the programs' operational frameworks and their impact on students, particularly on those who are historically marginalized in higher education (Caraballo et al., 2017).

The first-hand experience I have as a former HEOP student allows me to empathize with the participants' challenges and triumphs. It also offers me insight into the nuances of student experiences within these programs, which may not be readily apparent to an external observer. However, I recognize that my position may also carry inherent biases. My positive experiences with HEOP and CSTEP may influence my expectations and interpretations of the programs' efficacy. To mitigate this, I plan to regularly reflect on how my own experiences might affect the study and aim to keep a neutral point of view throughout.

As a Black man, my personal experiences with the systemic barriers faced by students of color in higher education also deeply inform my understanding of the challenges and successes

within these programs. Although I mentioned possible biases in the previous paragraph, having transitioned from my role in HEOP/CSTEP, my perspective has broadened, allowing me to approach the research with a balance of insider knowledge and an objective distance.

Research Methods

Data Collection

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from Bradley University and Little Apple University (pseudonym) prior to any survey distribution or semi-structured interview, ensuring that all ethical standards for research involving human subjects were met. Following approval, participants from HEOP and those enrolled in CSTEP attending Little Apple University were identified through the college's student information system, which is assumed to maintain uniform and reliable data regarding student demographics, academic performance, and program participation.

In this study, triangulation was employed as a multifaceted research strategy to bolster the validity and depth of the findings. Triangulation in the context of data collection refers to the use of multiple methods or sources to gather data on the same phenomenon (Green et. al.,1989). Diverse methodologies were incorporated, with quantitative data derived from surveys and qualitative insights obtained via semi-structured interviews. This methodological triangulation enabled a comprehensive analysis, with surveys providing a broad quantitative perspective and interviews offering a deeper qualitative context. Additionally, the study capitalized on temporal triangulation, gathering data at two pivotal points, before and after the semester, to capture the evolution of students' experiences and attitudes.

Instruments

Surveys

To gather data for this study, two separate surveys were developed and administered using Google Forms (Google Suites, 2023), which is a reliable and accessible platform that aligns with the digital proficiency of the study's participants (Khan &MacEachen, 2022). Google Forms was chosen for its user-friendly interface and convenience for both researchers and participants, facilitating the collection of data in a manner that respects participants' time and schedules. Participants had the flexibility to complete these surveys at their convenience within a one-week deadline. Designed to be completed in thirty minutes or less, these surveys serve to capture quantitative data about the study's objectives (see Appendix C-E).

The survey was designed to elicit information on a range of factors relevant to the academic and social experiences of Black male students who participated in summer bridge programs. It included items on demographic details, academic history, experiences with the HEOP summer bridge program, and perceptions of institutional support (Groves, 2011). Questions were also crafted to gather data on participants' high school GPA, first-semester college GPA, engagement in campus life, utilization of academic resources, and overall satisfaction with the college experience.

The first survey was distributed at the beginning of the fall semester, while the second was sent out after the semester's conclusion (see Appendix C). The pre-semester survey included a range of question types, from nominal and multiple-choice questions to Likert scales and open-ended responses. Two questions within the pre-semester survey were specifically designed to gather insights into the participants' initial impressions and expectations of summer bridge programs, offering a baseline understanding of their early semester experiences (Peytchev,

2013). The post-semester survey, on the other hand, featured four questions directly targeting the experiences of participants with summer bridge programs. For HEOP participants, these questions delved into the specifics of their program involvement and its perceived effects on their academic trajectory (see Appendix D). For the CSTEP group, the survey posed hypothetical questions about summer bridge programs to gauge their perspectives on such initiatives and their potential benefits (see Appendix E).

In line with best practices for educational research, data collected from the survey will be anonymized with pseudonyms, ensuring the confidentiality of participants' personal information. Key variables to be extracted from the survey data include self-reported race, academic performance indicators, financial aid information (such as estimated family contribution from the FAFSA), first-generation college status, and persistence indicators such as fall-to-fall enrollment. CSTEP participants were identified using the same criteria as HEOP participants to ensure consistency in the sample. This careful matching process allowed for a comparative analysis to understand the added value of the summer bridge program for HEOP students.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The study incorporated a two-phased approach to conducting semi-structured interviews with each participant. The first round of interviews was scheduled at the beginning of the fall semester, followed by a second round at the semester's end. This timing allowed for an exploration of the participants' initial expectations and experiences with the summer bridge program. Virtual interviews were selected as the primary mode of communication, considering their efficacy in fostering a relaxed and open environment for participants to share their perspectives and experiences. The convenience and accessibility of virtual interviews, especially

for students who are often navigating busy schedules, was critical in ensuring participant engagement and candidness in their responses (Khan & MacEachen, 2022).

Each interview was structured to last between 45 minutes to an hour, following a semi-structured format. This approach allowed for flexibility in the conversation while ensuring that all key topics were addressed. Pre-prepared interview scripts, included in the appendix, were utilized to maintain consistency across interviews and to ensure that all relevant aspects of the summer bridge program and its impact are explored.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews enables participants to share their stories in their own words, providing depth to their academic and social experiences at the PWI. This approach is beneficial for understanding the nuanced and complex nature of their experiences, which quantitative methods alone may not fully capture (Seidman, 2013). Furthermore, it allows for the exploration of themes that may emerge spontaneously during the conversation, providing an opportunity to delve deeper into areas not initially anticipated (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The second round of interviews focused on reflecting upon and comparing their experiences throughout the semester, thereby capturing any changes in perceptions or impacts of the program over time. The time between interviews was intentional and was very important for figuring out how the participants' experiences changed over time and what the long-term effects of the summer bridge program were (Roulston, 2010).

Procedures

The timeline for this study's collection took place over four months, from September to December. Initially, surveys were distributed to the participants, in both HEOP and CSTEP via email in early September, at the start of the fall semester. These surveys, designed to be completed within 30 minutes, gathered quantitative and qualitative data relevant to the study's

aims (Groves, 2011), which was to compare the impact of a summer bridge program on two groups of students at LAU, those who participated HEOP and those who did not (CSTEP).

After the initial surveys were received from the participants in September, the next phase of data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews. These interviews were to take place between September and late October. To facilitate this, an email invitation was sent out to each participant who completed the survey. This email detailed the purpose of the interview, its approximate duration, and the flexible nature of its scheduling. It emphasized that the interview was an opportunity for participants to elaborate on their survey responses and to provide deeper insights into their experiences with the summer bridge program. The email provided a link to a scheduling tool integrated with Google Calendar, allowing participants to choose a time slot for their interview that was convenient for them. This approach was chosen to accommodate the varied schedules of college students, ensuring maximum participation and convenience (Seidman, 2013).

In October, participants were informed that each interview would be conducted by myself, and would last approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The semi-structured nature of these interviews was highlighted, indicating that while there would be guiding questions based on the survey results, there would also be flexibility for participants to share additional thoughts or experiences they deemed relevant (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Additionally, the email reassured participants of the confidentiality of their responses. They were informed that the interviews would be audio-recorded for accuracy in transcription and data analysis, with the assurance that all information would be securely stored and only accessible to the research team (Boellstorff et al., 2012). Participants were also reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Following the completion of the fall semester, a second survey was sent to the participants in December. This survey, tailored slightly differently for the HEOP and non-HEOP group (CSTEP), aimed to capture the changes in perceptions and experiences over the course of the semester. The CSTEP group received hypothetical questions about summer bridge programs to provide a comparative perspective. The final round of virtual interviews was then scheduled once the semester ended around mid-December, mirroring the format of the initial interviews. These sessions were aimed at going deeper into the experiences and perceptions that may have evolved over the semester.

Throughout the study, pseudonyms replaced participants' real names to maintain anonymity and protect their identities, a practice consistent with ethical standards in qualitative research (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This measure ensured that there was no link between the participant's personal information and the research record.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Utilizing Google Forms for the quantitative portion of the data collection offered several advantages, especially for analyzing Likert scale responses. Google Forms provides a visual summary of responses, which aids in the assessment and interpretation of data trends. For instance, when participants responded to statements regarding their experiences with summer bridge programs on a Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree", Google Forms automatically generated graphical representations of these responses. This process involved aligning the study's three research questions with corresponding survey questions to ensure a targeted analysis. This feature was particularly useful in swiftly combining and comparing data across different participant groups.

Timeline

Data collection and analysis for the study were structured around the academic semester's key milestones (See Table 3). The distribution of pre-semester surveys was sent via e-mail on September 20th, 2023. Students were given up to 10 days to complete the surveys, at which they were prompted to sign up for a virtual interview. The pre-semester semi-structured interviews began on October 3rd, 2024 where students provided initial insights into their expectations and preparedness for the upcoming/current term. Upon the semester's conclusion in December, invitations to complete post-semester surveys were sent via e-mail on December 10th, 2023, following the same process.

Post-semester surveys were administered, garnering responses that reflected the students' academic and social experiences throughout the semester. The post-semester semi-structured interviews began on December 13th,2023, but due to the holiday break, they ran into the new year and concluded on January 7th. This iterative process of surveying and interviewing before and after the semester afforded a comprehensive view of the students' trajectories. It enabled a dynamic analysis of how motivations, engagement, and academic behaviors shifted over time, thereby painting a vivid picture of the student experience from orientation to finals. That allowed the data analysis process to begin on January 10th, 2024, once the data was organized. The data analysis process concluded on April 30th, 2024 (see Table 3).

Table 3

Timeline of action research

Date	Procedure
September, 21st, 2023	Sent e-mail communication letter to both HEOP and CSTEP students to complete pre-semester survey
October, 3rd, 2023	Started pre-semester semi-structured interviews
December 10th, 2023	Sent e-mail communication letter to both HEOP and CSTEP students to complete post-semester survey
December 13th, 2023	Started post-semester semi-structured interviews
January 7th, 2024	Started data analysis
April 30th, 2024	Concluded data analysis

Note. Table created by researcher on the 3rd of May 2023

Research Question 1

Quantitative Data Analysis

For the first research question, which inquired 'how summer bridge programs focusing on Black males affect their transition from high school to college and overall retention at a PWIs', specific survey questions were identified that could provide relevant quantitative data. The statistical analysis was designed to meticulously dissect the data gathered from survey responses. The surveys, structured around a Likert scale, provided a rich dataset that facilitated a nuanced exploration of participants' perceptions and experiences. To enhance the analytical rigor of the study, responses related to key variables—namely, engagement with summer bridge programs, perceived academic preparedness, and the overall ease of transition to college life— were categorized based on the participants' ratings. The questions selected for analysis included: whether the opportunity to attend any summer bridge programs impacted their decision to attend college, the extent to which participation in the program contributed to their feeling of

preparedness for the semester, and their perception of how the bridge program facilitated their transition to college. The initial step was to determine the participants' engagement with the summer bridge programs, which was addressed in two questions in the pre-semester survey. Responses to these questions provided baseline data on participants' initial engagement with and

The post-semester survey delved deeper, with four questions specifically tailored to examine the retrospective views of the participants on the role and impact of the summer bridge programs. The quantitative data from these questions were crucial in evaluating the program's effectiveness in fostering students' persistence toward graduation and increasing their engagement at PWIs.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The first research question explored how summer bridge programs affect the transition from high school to college for Black males at PWIs. In order to do that, an initial qualitative analysis from the first round of surveys and interviews was conducted. To do that, first, there had to be an understanding of why students chose to go to college. This was addressed in the pre-semester interview questions (see Appendix B) as participants were asked to answer a series of questions in order to assess what impacted their decision to attend college. Once I understood their motivation for wanting to attend college, I wanted to get a better understanding of what helped with the transition from high school to college. Question 10 in the post-semester survey (see Appendix C) explicitly asked participants 'to what extent do you believe that participating in the bridge program enhanced your active involvement and engagement within the PWI community?'. The next phase of analysis will expand upon these findings through a more detailed thematic analysis. This will involve coding the transcripts for recurring themes related to preparedness and transition experiences.

Research Question 2

Quantitative Data Analysis

For the second research question, which asked 'what motivates them (Black males) to persevere on to graduation at (PWIs), survey questions targeting participants' motivations for continuing their education at PWIs were quantitatively analyzed. The data provided a snapshot of the factor's participants found most influential in their decision to persist toward graduation. The summary of responses related to "employment opportunities after graduation," offers us insights into the motivations for Black males to persevere to graduation at PWIs, as well as their perception of employment opportunities after graduation (Manfra, 2019). In the post-semester survey for both groups (see Appendix C, and D) questions 8, 40, 50, and 53 address the reasons participants were motivated to go to college, as they touch on future aspirations, preparedness, and self-efficacy. For example, question 40 asks the participant to rate on a scale from 1 to 4, whether they felt that they always knew they would attend college. It's important to note that motivations for perseverance to graduation are multifaceted and may involve factors beyond employment opportunities, such as personal or academic motivations, support systems, cultural factors, etc.

Qualitative Data Analysis

For the qualitative data analysis of the second research question, the motivations that drive Black males at PWIs to graduation was examined. Upon completion of the semester, participants engaged in semi-structured interviews (detailed in Appendix G), during which they were asked a series of questions designed to understand their motivations and experiences. Specifically, question 5 probed into the factors that encouraged them to persist through their first semester and question 6 explored their reasons for returning for a second semester. Determining the

motivation behind their persistence is typically tied to a sense of belonging and community support (Caraballo et al., 2017). These questions are critical in understanding the motivations of Black males at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) as they directly address the various factors that influence their persistence and decision-making throughout their educational journey.

Research Question 3

Quantitative Data Analysis

The analysis for the third question assessed the role of summer bridge programs in engaging Black males at PWIs. To answer the third research question, a strategic selection of questions aimed at dissecting the nuances of how summer bridge programs potentially influence the engagement and sense of belonging among the participants. This approach was critical given the absence of direct participation in bridge programs among CSTEP respondents, so the questions selected for analysis provide crucial insights into understanding the broader implications of such programs on their engagement. Specifically, questions 26, 28, 34, and 37 from the post-semester surveys (see Appendix D, and E) gather data on the participants' current levels of engagement and belonging.

For instance, question 26 explores experiences of discrimination respondents may have experienced on campus, which can significantly affect a student's sense of belonging and engagement, while question 34 probes into students' perceptions of being a member of their college community, a direct indicator of belonging (see Appendix D & E). Although not explicitly about bridge programs, these questions illuminate key aspects of student life that bridge programs aim to address—such as enhancing a sense of community, improving academic readiness, and fostering a supportive environment. By analyzing responses to these questions, the study aims to extrapolate how summer bridge programs might influence these critical factors,

shedding light on their potential to enhance the engagement and success of Black males at PWIs (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Active involvement in campus life is a critical component of the student experience, often linked to increased satisfaction, a stronger sense of community, and higher retention rates (Caraballo et al., 2017).

Qualitative Data Analysis

To dive deeper into the factors contributing to student retention and engagement at PWIs, a series of targeted questions were posed to participants. Firstly, in question 4 of the post-semester interview (see Appendix G) students were asked whether they became members of any organizations or groups during their first semester, aiming to understand the role of extracurricular engagement in their university life. Next, to gain insight into their perseverance, students were questioned about the factors that influenced their decision to continue their studies through the first semester in question five. The sixth question probed into their motivations for re-enrollment, seeking to uncover what specifically drew them back to continue their academic pursuits for a second semester. For the last question, the survey explored the presence and impact of motivational figures within the college. Participants were prompted to reflect on whether there was anyone at the institution who inspired or encouraged them, delving into the identity of these individuals and the reasons behind their influence. The full analysis will seek to define 'engagement' as understood by participants and measure how bridge programs contribute to this engagement, with the understanding that complete data collection will provide a fuller picture.

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Chapter 3 Summary

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This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the methodologies and methods employed to explore the critical questions of this study. This chapter outlined the study's setting, data collection methods such as surveys and interviews, and the approach to analyzing the data.

It explained how these methods helped examine the effects of summer bridge programs on Black male students at predominantly white institutions, their reasons for staying through to graduation, and how these programs help them engage with their college environment.

Chapter 4 promises to build upon the groundwork laid here, as it will present and interpret the study's findings. It will report on the data gathered from the methodologies described in this chapter and ultimately offer answers to the study's pressing questions.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND CONNECTIONS TO LITERATURE

This chapter goes deeper into the impactful examination of summer bridge programs on the academic and social experiences of traditional college-age Black males at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Anchored by three pivotal research questions, this research paper seeks to unravel:

1. How do summer bridge programs focused on Black males affect their transition from high school to college and overall retention at predominantly White institutions (PWI)?

2. What motivates Black males to persevere on to graduation at PWIs?

3. How do summer bridge programs play a role in the increasing engagement of Black males at PWIs?

This chapter will go into an examination of the responses and insights gathered from six chosen participants from Little Apple University (LAU) within the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) and the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP). These individuals engaged in a comprehensive assessment process that included both pre- and post-semester surveys, complemented by semi-structured interviews conducted before and after the semester ended. This initial phase was then followed by a qualitative inquiry, which served to elucidate and interpret the findings from the quantitative stage.

Findings

For this research project, the study's criteria included Black males who were first-time college students, aged between 18-20 years old, with an average age of 19. As mentioned in the previous chapter, three students were chosen from ten HEOP participants, while another set of

three students were randomly selected from a group of ten CSTEP participants. This methodology aimed to illuminate the differential impacts and experiences of students within the HEOP framework compared to those outside of it, focusing particularly on the influence of HEOP's summer bridge program on easing the transition into college life.

The joint oversight of the HEOP and CSTEP programs under one office at LAU provided a fascinating perspective for this study. HEOP students take part in a summer bridge program to help them transition into college, unlike their CSTEP counterparts. Yet, both groups benefited from broad academic and social support from the HEOP/CSTEP office during their time in college. This unique setup allowed me to examine closely the impact of summer bridge programs, giving rich insights into how each program shaped student experiences in distinct ways.

This research adopted a sequential explanatory strategy, beginning with the collection and comparative analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) of quantitative data through pre-semester and post-semester surveys administered to both HEOP and CSTEP students. Comparative analysis involves comparing two or more sets of data to identify similarities, differences, or trends. The surveys aimed to assess students' perceptions of academic preparedness, sense of belonging, and overall college experience before and after their participation in the programs. This quantitative data provided a foundational understanding of the students' experiences and was instrumental in identifying key areas for further exploration.

Following the quantitative phase, qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured, virtual interviews conducted both pre-semester and post-semester. These interviews offered deeper insights into the students' personal journeys, challenges, and successes. From the semi-structured interviews, several overarching themes emerged, painting a vivid picture of the

students' journeys. As illustrated in Figure 1 (see below), five key themes were identified: 'Academic Preparedness' (8.9%), which refers to the necessary adjustments students made to meet the demands of college-level work; 'Transition from High School to College' (22.2%), which encapsulated the challenges of adapting to a new educational and social environment; and 'Motivation to Persevere to Graduation' (26.7%), highlighting the driving forces behind their continued pursuit of education.

Additionally, the 'Role of Summer Bridge Programs' (15.6%) was noted for its importance in aiding students' transition into college, while 'Sense of Belonging' (26.7%) emerged as a critical factor for integration and retention. These percentages underscore the relative prevalence of each theme among the participants' responses, with 'Sense of Belonging' and 'Motivation to Persevere' being the most frequently mentioned, highlighting their significance in the students' overall college experiences.

Figure 1

Key Themes from Semi-Structured Interviews
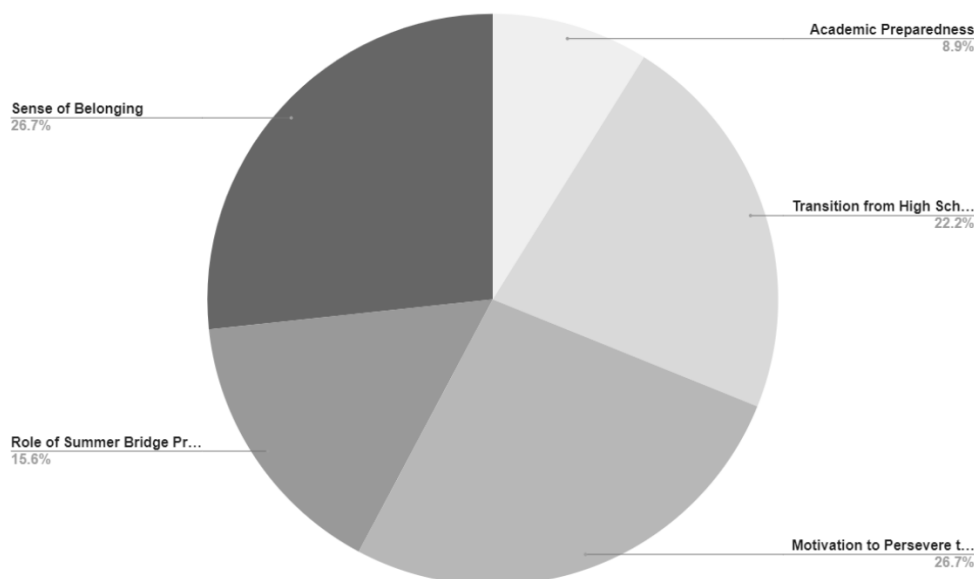
In this study, I employed both pre- and post-semester surveys for HEOP and CSTEP students, maintaining consistency with core questions across both survey forms. Table 4 offers a side-by-side comparison of HEOP and CSTEP student survey responses. The numerical values represent average ratings for a series of questions that cover various aspects of the students' college experience. The post-semester surveys were tailored slightly to evaluate students' experiences following their semester, with a particular focus on the impact of the summer bridge program and students' academic and social outcomes. Creswell and Creswell (2018) acknowledge that minor modifications to survey instruments are sometimes necessary to capture specific experiences or outcomes, provided the core questions—those measuring the key study outcomes—remain consistent.

Additional questions also addressed students' experiences of discrimination and their involvement in extracurricular activities. The inclusion of this comprehensive table provides readers with an overarching view of the data collected from HEOP and CSTEP students (see Table 4). These ratings give us a quantitative measure of the students' perceptions and experiences related to various aspects of their college life, including their sense of preparedness, belonging, academic challenges, and support systems. The full list of questions will be included in the Appendix at the end of this document.

Table 4

Average Survey Ratings of HEOP and CSTEP Students

Question #	HEOP Pre-Semester Survey	HEOP Post-Semester Survey	CSTEP Pre-Semester Survey	CSTEP Post-Semester Survey
1	2.33	3.00	2.67	3.00
2	3.33	3.00	4.00	2.67
3	3.00	2.67	3.33	2.33
4	2.67	3.33	3.33	3.00
5	2.33	3.33	2.00	1.33

6	3.00	3.00	1.67	2.67
7	2.00	3.00	1.67	2.67
8	3.00	3.00	2.33	2.67
9	2.33	2.33	3.67	2.67
10	3.00	2.67	2.00	3.33
11	3.67	3.33	2.67	3.33
12	3.33	3.33	2.33	3.00
13	3.67	3.33	1.67	2.67
14	2.67	2.67	1.67	3.33
15	2.67	3.33	2.33	2.00
16	(written)	2.33	(written)	2.67
17	3.33	2.33	3.00	2.67
18	3.67	2.33	2.67	3.33
19	3.67	2.33	2.33	2.00
20	3.00	3.67	3.00	2.67
21	3.00	2.33	3.00	2.00
22	4.00	3.00	2.33	2.67
23	3.67	2.33	1.67	2.33
24	4.00	2.00	3.33	3.00
25	4.00	2.67	2.33	2.33
26	4.00	1.67	1.33	2.67
27	3.67	1.67	3.00	3.33
28	3.67	2.00	4.00	(written)
29	3.67	2.33	3.33	2.33
30	3.67	(written)	3.00	2.67
31	3.67	2.33	2.00	3.33
32	3.00	2.33	3.00	2.33
33	3.67	1.33	4.00	3.33
34	3.33	1.67	3.67	2.67
35	3.33	2.33	2.00	3.33
36	3.00	2.00	3.67	3.00
37	3.67	1.67	3.00	3.33
38	3.33	1.00	3.33	2.33
39		2.00		2.67
40		2.33		2.67
41		2.33		2.33

42	2.67	3.00
43	2.33	2.00
44	2.67	2.00
45	2.33	3.00
46	1.67	3.00
47	2.67	2.33
48	3.00	3.00

Note. The pre-semester survey only included 37 numerical questions.

To ensure reliability, several questions were repeated in both surveys. This repetition aimed to reduce the likelihood of students answering superficially, encouraging thoughtful responses across both time points. The survey addressed key areas of the study, including: feeling of belonging, attending summer bridge program, academic capability, knowledge of resources for academic goals and mentorship support.

A strong feeling of belonging was critical for retention, as students who feel valued and connected are more likely to persist and succeed. Summer bridge programs offered early exposure to resources, peer networks, and academic skills, helping students build confidence. Academic capability measured students' readiness for college-level work, while knowledge of resources assessed their awareness of essential supports like tutoring and advising. Lastly, mentorship support enhanced personal growth, resilience, and institutional connection, further strengthening students' overall college experience. Together, these areas highlighted the factors contributing to student retention and success.

Table 5 (see Table 5) provides a summary of pre- and post-semester survey ratings for HEOP and CSTEP students across the above mentioned five key areas: feeling of belonging, attending summer bridge program, academic capability, knowledge of resources for academic goals, and mentorship support. These areas represent core aspects of student engagement and readiness, as measured before and after their first semester. The table highlights shift in students'

perceptions, offering insights into how their initial expectations compared to their experiences by semester's end. This data is essential for understanding the impact of support programs and the challenges faced by each group as they transitioned into college life.

Table 5

Pre- and Post-Semester Survey Data for HEOP and CSTEP Groups

Survey Area	HEOP Pre-Semester Survey	HEOP Post-Semester Survey	CSTEP Pre-Semester Survey	CSTEP Post-Semester
Feeling of Belonging	2.67	2.33	3.33	2.67
Attending Summer Bridge Program	3.67	3.00	1.67	2.67
Academic Capability	3.67	2.33	2.67	2.33
Knowledge of Resources for Academic Goals	4.00	2.00	3.33	3.00
Mentorship Support	3.67	2.33	4.00	2.33

Note: The pre-semester ratings for both HEOP and CSTEP are shown separately where applicable.

Based on the survey data presented in the table (see Table 5), several trends emerged across key areas. For feeling of belonging, there was a slight decrease for HEOP students (from 2.67 to 2.33), suggesting that these students, who may have anticipated challenges, were less surprised by difficulties in fitting in. In contrast, CSTEP students experienced a more significant drop (from 3.33 to 2.67), possibly due to entering college with higher initial confidence or optimism regarding their social integration. In the area of attending the summer bridge program, HEOP students rated the program's helpfulness lower post-semester (from 3.67 to 3.00), indicating a potential gap between their expectations and the program's outcomes. For CSTEP students, however, their post-semester perception improved, which could be attributed to

realizing the program's benefits after navigating college without its support. Observing peers who had participated may have highlighted the challenges they faced in its absence.

Regarding academic capability, HEOP students' confidence saw a noticeable decline by the end of the semester, reflecting the adjustment between initial expectations and the reality of college academics. CSTEP students also experienced a slight drop (to 2.33), indicating they may have entered with more realistic expectations about their academic readiness. In terms of knowledge of resources for academic goals, both groups reported lower ratings post-semester, with HEOP students initially having higher expectations due to their structured summer support. Meanwhile, CSTEP students, who faced fewer entry restrictions, might have felt more confident initially but encountered challenges in locating resources independently.

Lastly, both groups showed declines in mentorship support by semester's end, underscoring the challenges in sustaining effective mentorship without structured programs. This trend may also reflect the limitations in staff capacity for supporting both HEOP and CSTEP students, as the combined responsibility could dilute the level of individualized support provided to each group. At other institutions, these programs typically have separate directors and dedicated offices, allowing for more targeted and consistent mentorship. The current setup may indicate a need for additional resources or staff to enhance the mentorship experience and better meet students' evolving needs. Additionally, given my positionality in this study, I recognize that participants may only know HEOP and CSTEP staff as a unified team due to their shared office and resources. However, in many colleges, CSTEP and HEOP programs each have their own dedicated staff, which can provide more focused attention to students' needs. In the specific case of Little Apple University, CSTEP was still a relatively new program, only entering its fourth year when this study began, while HEOP had been established for over 50 years. This disparity

in program longevity may have impacted the staff's ability to balance and address the unique needs of both groups effectively, as they were likely still learning how to allocate resources and adapt to supporting CSTEP students alongside HEOP students. This combined setup may have led to the decline in mentorship ratings, highlighting a need for additional staffing or resources to provide sustained, individualized support that keeps pace with the growing and evolving needs of both HEOP and CSTEP students.

This discrepancy highlights the need for further discussion and analysis, which will be unpacked in the paragraphs that follow. Understanding these nuanced differences is crucial for assessing how program structures like summer bridge programs impact students' experiences and what additional support might be necessary to enhance their sense of belonging and preparedness. By comparing these survey responses, the data in Table 5 helps establish a foundation for the more detailed exploration of key insights that will be discussed in subsequent sections, particularly regarding how different program structures influence student adjustment, engagement, and success. Each section will be methodically structured around the individual research questions.

Research Question 1

Quantitative Analysis

The initial research question asked: *How do summer bridge programs focused on Black males affect their transition from high school to college and overall retention at predominantly White institutions (PWI)?* This question aimed to examine how the transition from high school to college at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) impacts the retention of Black male students, with a particular focus on the influence of summer bridge programs during this crucial transitional phase. Table 5 displays the average ratings from both HEOP and CSTEP students

across specific questions designed to measure core areas related to this transitional experience, specifically referencing responses in the pre- and post-semester surveys (see Table 5).

Question 5 in the pre-semester survey asked students to rate their initial "feeling of belonging," with HEOP students rating it at 2.67, which then dropped to 2.33 post-semester (see Appendix B). This decline suggests that although the summer bridge program may have initially equipped HEOP students with a realistic outlook on potential challenges, their sense of belonging still decreased over time. Conversely, CSTEP students, who entered without a summer bridge experience, showed a similar decline (from 3.33 to 2.67), possibly due to an initial overconfidence or optimism about integrating into the campus community without structured early support. In evaluating the impact of attending the summer bridge program, Question 14 in the pre-semester survey specifically asked HEOP students about the perceived benefits of the program, yielding an initial rating of 3.67. This rating declined to 3.00 by the end of the semester (see Appendix B), indicating a potential gap between the program's perceived and actual benefits.

Interestingly, CSTEP students showed an increase in their post-semester response regarding the summer bridge program, which was somewhat unexpected. This shift could be attributed to them observing the benefits of the bridge program among their HEOP peers, even without direct participation. After navigating the semester without the structured support of a bridge program, many CSTEP students might have come to realize the value of such an experience in overcoming the academic and social challenges they encountered. This retrospective appreciation highlights how structured early support might be advantageous for students in similar programs.

By selecting these particular questions, the analysis aimed to concentrate on the most relevant data points that speak directly to the research objective of understanding how summer bridge programs impact student transition, engagement, and retention at PWIs.

The results emerging from Table 5 offer an insightful correlation with the admission processes unique to the HEOP and CSTEP programs. The findings depicted in Table 5 can be interpreted through the lens of the admission processes for the HEOP and CSTEP programs. HEOP students were admitted to college through the HEOP program, which typically includes mandatory participation in a summer bridge program as part of the admission into the school. This direct correlation likely explains the higher average rating of 3.67, reflecting the integral role that the summer bridge program played in influencing their decision to attend college. In contrast, CSTEP students, who first had to be admitted to the college before applying to the CSTEP program, rated the impact of summer bridge programs at a lower 1.67 on average. This lower rating may be reflective of the indirect or non-existent interaction with summer bridge programs, given that their admission into college was not contingent upon their participation in such a program. Consequently, CSTEP students may not associate their college attendance as strongly with summer bridge programs, compared to HEOP students for whom this experience was a fundamental part of their entry into higher education.

Interestingly, CSTEP students showed an increase in their post-semester response regarding the summer bridge program, which was somewhat unexpected. This shift could be attributed to them observing the benefits of the bridge program among their HEOP peers, even without direct participation. After navigating the semester without the structured support of a bridge program, many CSTEP students might have come to realize the value of such an experience in overcoming the academic and social challenges they encountered. This

retrospective appreciation highlights how structured early support might be advantageous for students in similar programs.

Qualitative Analysis

In the qualitative analysis for Research Question 1, there was a noticeable development in the depth and richness of the data between the pre-semester and post-semester interviews. Early on, the participants' insights in the pre-semester interviews were relatively limited, reflecting their status as newcomers to the college experience. However, the narratives drawn from the post-semester interviews were more in-depth, reflecting the participants' accumulated experiences and insights. The narratives, particularly from Elijah and Ali, highlight the initial excitement about the freedom of college life coupled with concerns about new responsibilities and the significant adjustment required. Elijah stated: "When I left... I was having fun, and stuff like, I was being a kid but I felt selfish because I'm having so much fun and my people are suffering back home, they're already mourning my brother and now they're missing me, so I left with guilt" (E. Harper, personal communication, September 17th, 2023).

The benefits of summer bridge programs were evident in Ali's story, highlighting their role in preparing him for academic success and fostering early connections within the college community. During his pre-semester interview, he shared that "the first couple of weeks of classes were pretty cool. It wasn't too stressful... because I had the summer bridge program" (A. Hassan, personal communication, September 15th, 2023). In his post-semester interview, he shared his initial apprehensions about classwork, recalling how he felt "pretty nervous about the classes." However, he acknowledged the significant assistance he received from participating in the Summer Academic Institute (SAI), which effectively equipped him for the challenges ahead.

Although CSTEP participants were not required to participate in a summer bridge program, Isaac Coleman mentioned that the support and sense of belonging he found within the CSTEP program and his relationships with faculty were pivotal. He shared "the CSTEP program is the sole reason why I stayed at Little Apple University... It was an amazing support system. I felt pushed, to better myself to continue to go to class" (I. Coleman, personal communication, December 12th, 2023). He went on to add "[about the CSTEP staff] the positive effect that you're able to have on people in your very own community, that helped me to define the kind of work that I want to do. And so, my long-term goal is to work in an opportunity program specifically in a college."

Research Question 2

Quantitative Analysis

The second research question asks: *What motivates Black males to persevere to graduation at predominantly White institutions (PWIs)?* The data in Table 5 (see Table 5) regarding academic capability, knowledge of resources for academic goals, and mentorship support, provide valuable insights into key motivators for Black male students. These areas reflect critical motivators for perseverance, as students' confidence in their academic abilities, awareness of resources, and access to mentorship can significantly impact their motivation to continue their education in a PWI setting.

For academic capability, pre-semester Question 19 assessed students' confidence in their readiness for college academics, with HEOP students rating it high at 3.67 (see Appendix B). This initial rating indicates a strong belief in their academic potential, an intrinsic motivator for persistence. However, by the end of the semester, both HEOP (Question 43) and CSTEP (Question 41) students' ratings dropped to 2.33, reflecting the challenges of adapting to college-

level coursework (see appendix C and D). This decline suggests that while early confidence is important, ongoing academic support is essential to maintain motivation as students confront increasing academic demands.

Knowledge of resources for academic goals was also a critical area, with Question 25 in the pre-semester survey showing that HEOP students initially rated their resource awareness at 4.00. This high rating reflects the motivational boost that comes from feeling prepared to access academic resources independently. However, post-semester responses in Question 47 for HEOP students dropped significantly to 2.00, indicating challenges in maintaining that initial resource confidence. CSTEP students showed a smaller decline from 3.33 to 3.00 (Question 45), which suggests they may have had more realistic expectations from the start. For both groups, consistent resource orientation throughout the semester could enhance motivation by helping students feel supported as they navigate academic challenges independently.

Lastly, mentorship support was measured by Question 29 in the pre-semester survey, with HEOP students initially rating it at 3.67, underscoring the importance of mentorship as a source of guidance and encouragement. By semester's end, however, both HEOP (Question 51) and CSTEP (Question 49) students' ratings dropped to 2.33, revealing a gap in sustained mentorship. This decrease highlights the need for ongoing mentorship support, as consistent guidance and encouragement are critical motivators for Black male students facing the unique challenges of a PWI environment. The lack of regular mentorship engagement could hinder students' sense of belonging and resilience, potentially impacting their motivation to persist

Together, the survey questions (see Table 5) demonstrate that academic confidence, resource awareness, and mentorship are crucial motivators. Initial high ratings indicate that programs like the summer bridge can provide a motivational foundation, but declines over the

semester suggest a need for sustained support in these areas to help students remain engaged and committed to their academic journeys.

Qualitative Analysis

In the qualitative analysis of this section, participants articulated a range of elements that bolstered their determination to persist in their educational endeavors. The family's educational values, especially significant within his Caribbean heritage, played a central role in Isaac Coleman's choice to pursue higher education. Isaac, who was a part of the CSTEP program stated:

> I didn't know how successful I would be in college, because I had nobody around me, who had any type of knowledge of what college is like, currently. I had nobody to share that insight with me. And so, when I thought about me going to school and stuff like that, in my head, I was only going because my family wanted me to but not necessary because I would be successful in it.

His selection of an institution was informed by the prospects for academic growth and the capacity to fulfill his family's expectations, which significantly influenced his outlook on college life.

In his interview, Marcus James, who is also in the CSTEP program, expressed a strong sense of purpose and determination toward his college education, influenced by his desire to overcome stereotypes and succeed academically and socially. He shared that:

> It was a bit of a milestone because I know, a lot of people from the black community, don't necessarily get to transcend beyond that milestone (attend college) ... So, the fact that I was able to do four years (of high school) and... not let the stereotype of how I may be perceived stop me from graduating.

His motivation was reinforced by personal goals and a deep commitment to proving his capabilities. He went on to say "I think my biggest motivation was kind of seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and... I think this kind of knowing where I was going to get to was gonna be my biggest motivating factor."

Julian Ford, who was in the HEOP program, highlighted the support he received from mentors and the college community as pivotal to his motivation, reinforcing his commitment to his goals despite challenges. When describing his experience with his HEOP advisors, he said "We connected and not because we looked like each other... They just made you feel comfortable and talked to you and opened up to you and you opened up to them" (J. Ford, personal communication, September 18th, 2023).

Research Question 3

Quantitative Analysis

To explore the third research question, '*In what ways do summer bridge programs enhance the engagement of Black males at predominantly White institutions (PWIs)?*', the detailed structure of the HEOP summer bridge program at Little Apple University (LAU), illustrated in Figure 2 (see Figure 2), combined with the quantitative data from Table 5 (see Table 5), provides key insights into how these programs foster student engagement.

Figure 2 depicts an extensive schedule that spans the entire month of July, incorporating a variety of academic classes, workshops, and social activities scheduled from morning until evening. This robust programming includes both weekday and weekend activities, demonstrating the comprehensive approach taken by the summer bridge program to prepare students for college life. By providing consistent, structured support, the program establishes a foundation for engagement before students formally begin the academic year. The program's combination of

academic classes, such as MTH 1000 and ENG 1000, and personal development workshops on topics like financial aid, counseling, and career exploration, introduces students early to essential resources and skills. These activities not only build academic readiness but also foster familiarity with campus resources, increasing students' likelihood of engaging with these services independently during the semester.

Figure 2

HEOP Summer Bridge Program Schedule at Little Apple University (July 2021)

Summer Academic Institute July 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
4 Student Arrival 2:00pm-5:00pm Meet & Greet 5:00pm-6:00pm Dinner 6:00pm–7:00pm Fireworks 7:00pm	**5** Orientation (Lunch included) 10:00 am- 1:00 pm Team Building 1:00 pm- 3:00 pm Dinner 5:00 pm– 7:00 pm RPC Event 7:00pm	**6 FIRST DAY** Breakfast - in Dorms ENG 1000 8:00 am MTH 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm Financial Aid 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**7** Breakfast - in Dorms ENG 1000- 8:00 am MTH 1000- 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm Library Tour 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**8** Breakfast - in Dorms ENG 1000- 8:00 am MTH 1000- 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm HEOP 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**9** NO CLASSES Orientation All-Day	**10** Breakfast & Lunch in Dorm Team Building 11:00 am HEOP Outing: Dinner in Beacon
11 Breakfast & Lunch in Dorms Team Building 2:00- 5:00pm Dinner 5:00-7:00pm Study Hours 7:00pm-9:00pm	**12** Breakfast - in Dorms MTH 1000 8:00 am ENG 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm Writing Center 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**13** Breakfast - in Dorms MTH 1000 8:00 am ENG 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm HEOP 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**14** Breakfast - in Dorms MTH 1000 8:00 am ENG 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm IT 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**15** Breakfast - in Dorms MTH 1000 8:00 am ENG 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm Alumni Panel 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**16** Breakfast - in Dorms MTH 1000 8:00 am ENG 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm HEOP Outing: Walmart Run Dinner and Bowling	**17** Breakfast & Lunch in Dorms Team Building 11:00 am HEOP Outing: Orange County Fair
18 Breakfast & Lunch in Dorms Dinner 5:00pm-7:00pm Study Hours 7:00pm-9:00pm	**19** Breakfast - in Dorms ENG 1000 8:00 am MTH 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm Counseling/ Disability 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**20** Breakfast - in Dorms ENG 1000 8:00 am MTH 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm Career Center 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**21** Breakfast - in Dorms ENG 1000 8:00 am MTH 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm Student activities 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**22** Breakfast - in Dorms ENG 1000 8:00 am MTH 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm HEOP 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**23** Breakfast - in Dorms ENG 1000 8:00 am MTH 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm HEOP Outing: Walmart Run Dinner at Billy Joes	**24** Breakfast in Dorms HEOP Outing: White Water Rafting Adirondack Mountains
25 Breakfast & Lunch in Dorms Dinner 5:00pm-7:00pm Study Hours 7:00pm-9:00pm	**26** Breakfast - in Dorms MTH 1000 8:00 am ENG 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm Fall Registration 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**27** Breakfast - in Dorms MTH 1000 8:00 am ENG 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm Financial Aid 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**28** Breakfast - in Dorms MTH 1000 8:00 am ENG 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm HEOP 2:45 pm Dinner 5:00 pm Study Hours 7:00 pm	**29** Breakfast - in Dorms MTH 1000 8:00 am ENG 1000 10:15 am Lunch The View 12:30 pm HEO 0510 1:30 pm Prep for final Banquet HEOP Final Banquet Ceremony	**30** Breakfast in Dorms Student must turn in keys to Res Life and leave before noon.	**27** Enjoy your summer!

Note. This example of the HEOP summer bridge program schedule was developed by the researcher based on the actual program schedule at Little Apple University.

Figure 2 showcases the HEOP summer bridge program schedule at Little Apple University (LAU), emphasizing the breadth and depth of programming that students undergo before starting their first semester. This structured month-long program includes daily academic classes, such as MTH 1000 and ENG 1000, designed to build core academic skills. Additionally, the schedule incorporates evening study hours to reinforce classroom learning, helping students establish effective study habits and routines that they can carry into the academic year. This focus on academic preparation is crucial for boosting students' confidence in handling college-level coursework, which directly impacts their engagement and willingness to participate actively in the college environment.

Beyond academics, Figure 2 highlights a series of personal development and resource-oriented workshops, including sessions on financial aid, career counseling, and disability services. These workshops familiarize students with campus resources, providing practical knowledge they can rely on as they navigate challenges during the semester. By introducing students to these resources early, the program encourages them to engage actively with the support systems available on campus, increasing the likelihood that they will seek help independently when needed. This early awareness of resources fosters a proactive approach to problem-solving and engagement, equipping students to take full advantage of the university's support infrastructure.

The data in Table 5 further underscores the impact of these structured summer bridge activities on student engagement. For instance, the feeling of belonging and knowledge of resources for academic goals reveal that HEOP students initially felt well-prepared and connected after the summer bridge experience. Pre-semester survey ratings indicate that HEOP students began with a relatively strong sense of belonging (2.67) and high knowledge of

resources (4.00) (see Table 5). However, the decline in these ratings by semester's end, with belonging dropping to 2.33 and knowledge of resources to 2.00, suggests that while the summer bridge program provided an initial boost in engagement, continued reinforcement throughout the semester is necessary to maintain it.

In terms of attending summer bridge programs, HEOP students rated the program's helpfulness at 3.67 initially, which slightly decreased to 3.00 post-semester, indicating that while the program met many of their expectations, the transition to independence on campus introduced new challenges (see Table 5). CSTEP students, who did not participate in the summer bridge program, showed a marked increase in their post-semester rating of the program's potential helpfulness, from 1.67 to 2.67, suggesting that, in hindsight, they recognized the value of such structured pre-college support (see Table 5).

Moreover, mentorship support, which is a key component of the summer bridge program shown in Figure 2, initially received positive ratings (3.67) from HEOP students but also experienced a drop by the end of the semester (to 2.33) (see Table 5). This suggests that while the program provided foundational mentorship connections, the absence of ongoing mentorship throughout the semester may have impacted students' engagement. Regular mentorship, both during and after the summer bridge program, could be critical in sustaining the engagement benefits initiated in the summer.

In summary, Figure 2 and Table 5 collectively illustrate how the HEOP summer bridge program at LAU supports Black male students' engagement by offering a blend of academic preparation, resource introduction, and mentorship before the semester begins. This initial engagement, however, appears to wane as the semester progresses, emphasizing the need for continuous support mechanisms. The summer bridge program creates a strong starting point for

engagement by immersing students in the campus environment, but sustained engagement may require ongoing resources, mentorship, and community-building initiatives throughout the academic year to reinforce and build upon the foundation established in the summer.

Qualitative Analysis

HEOP participant, Ali Hassan, shared some intriguing insights about his initial semester experiences and his interactions with the HEOP/CSTEP office. He described the office as a source of motivation, particularly during challenging times:

> Every time when I'm in the office, you see, they say encouraging things to everyone in general. The times where I'll come to them about struggling classes and they motivated me. They pushed me. It started with the HEOP interview because that was my first interview where I felt more like myself. I was able to be more of myself, but he (HEOP Staff) never was like weird about it and I was able to articulate better things like my thoughts and questions.

In contrast, Ali's experiences with the broader campus culture at LAU were markedly different. He expressed a distinct lack of belonging outside the supportive confines of the HEOP/CSTEP office, noting, "I didn't feel a sense of belonging. It was like I was the only black person in the middle of the class haunted by white people…". When further discussing these feelings and whether he had addressed them with the college administration, Ali's frustrations were apparent: "I feel like the higher-ups, personally don't feel like they care enough about the students. I feel like they look at it more like another business".

CSTEP participant, Nathan Rivera, who was a commuter also shared a different experience. Nathan attributed a downward turn in his first year, partly due to being a commuter and not getting the full college experience. Impacting the friendships, he was looking to make.

He shared "Because I commute I don't really feel like I'm getting a true college experience that a lot of people around me are getting... because they really do advertise like 'family and everything' but LAU couldn't be more clicky". Isaac Coleman who was also a commuter in the CSTEP program shared similar sentiments stating ""When I first started college it was just me and God. It was extremely lonely... I was a commuter." He went on further and shared:

> For my college career there, I really had the experience of driving to class and driving back home, questioning why I was in school. I was unaware and it was interesting because I happened to have done one of the orientations over the summer. I just didn't feel like it was very thorough. And so, I ended up being a student at the school starting off taking classes and I didn't really know resources. I didn't really know places I could plug myself in to build a sense of community and it was extremely lonely.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings from this study and connected them to existing literature on summer bridge programs and the experiences of Black male students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). By analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, the research assessed the impact of summer bridge programs on students' transition, engagement, and retention, uncovering key themes such as academic preparedness, motivation to persist, and sense of belonging. These findings align with prior research that underscores the importance of culturally responsive programming and inclusive campus environments in supporting student success.

Chapter 5 will conclude the discussion by answering the research questions, highlighting the limitations of the study, and discussing its practical implications. It will offer recommendations for future research and explore how the findings can inform program

development and policymaking at PWIs to better support Black male students. Additionally, it will suggest avenues for further research to continue improving the effectiveness of summer bridge programs and other supportive structures in higher education.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to explore how summer bridge programs influence the transition, retention, and academic success of Black male students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Specifically, this study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. How do summer bridge programs focused on Black males affect their transition from high school to college and overall retention at predominantly White institutions (PWI)?

2. What motivates Black males to persevere on to graduation at PWIs?

3. How do summer bridge programs play a role in increasing the engagement of Black males at PWIs?

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences. The findings revealed that while summer bridge programs can enhance academic preparedness and ease the transition into college, they also present challenges related to social integration and family expectations. This chapter will discuss these findings in detail, providing answers to the study's research questions, discussing implications for practice, acknowledging limitations, suggesting areas for future research, and concluding the study.

Summary of Findings and Discussion

Prevalence of Themes

The primary research question's focus on summer bridge programs meant that the interview approach needed to be open and non-directive to capture the experiences and perceptions of the students authentically. This non-leading approach was intended to allow students to organically share their thoughts and feelings about the programs, without being

swayed by the questions posed. The methodology was purposefully designed to elicit spontaneous and genuine reflections on the role of summer bridge programs in their transition to college life.

Quantitative data from the pre-semester and post-semester surveys supports these findings. For example, only 15.6% of HEOP students rated the role of summer bridge programs as highly impactful in their overall college decision-making process, as reflected in their average response of 2.33 to Question 13 in the pre-semester survey. This aligns with the qualitative data, where 'Academic Preparedness' and the 'Role of Summer Bridge Programs' emerged as less prevalent themes, mentioned by fewer than 20% of the participants. These percentages suggest that, while these programs play a role in the initial transition, their perceived impact may diminish as students' progress through their college experience.

In the case of 'Academic Preparedness', although crucial for students embarking on their college journey, it emerged as a less prevalent theme in the semi-structured interviews. This is reflected in the quantitative data from Question 50, where HEOP students' average rating of academic preparedness increased only slightly from 3.33 in the pre-semester survey to 3.67 in the post-semester survey, indicating modest growth in their confidence to meet academic challenges after participating in the summer bridge program. This could indicate that once students are engaged in their ongoing coursework and college life, the initial emphasis on academic preparedness provided by summer bridge programs may recede into the background of their day-to-day priorities. Some students may have perceived the summer bridge program not just as an educational steppingstone but also as a burden, particularly if it meant sacrificing their final summer of freedom before the full onset of their college experience.

Notably, an HEOP participant, Elijah, described a conflicting situation where his participation in the summer bridge program, despite earning him six college credits, was not fully supported by his mother, reflecting a tension between the perceived benefits of the program and family expectations. He shared his mother's concern: "what do you mean? I just did a whole summer where I got six credits. what do you mean? She said, 'I don't care, you're not going back'. They don't like that whole, you're going away thing" adding that "they think that, you're gonna turn into a different person. And obviously, they hear about [what happens at] college" (E. Harper, personal communication, September 17th, 2023). This underscores the complex interplay between the value of preparatory programs and familial attitudes towards the transition to higher education.

Regarding the 'Role of Summer Bridge Programs', the quantitative data from Question 17 indicated that HEOP students had an average post-semester rating of 2.67 for feeling prepared by the program, compared to 3.33 for CSTEP students who did not participate in a summer bridge program. This suggests differing perceptions of preparedness between the two groups, highlighting the varied impact of summer bridge programs on students' academic readiness. While such initiatives are designed to ease the transition to college life, they may not always be perceived as entirely beneficial by students. Although designed to offer academic and social advantages, some students viewed these programs as encroaching upon their final summer before the commencement of their college journey. Such perceptions are particularly understandable when juxtaposing their experiences with those of their peers who may have spent the summer in more leisurely pursuits. The relative infrequency of this theme in the interview discussions suggests that while students acknowledge the benefits of summer bridge programs, they may also regard them with a certain ambivalence due to the trade-off between preparation and leisure.

Despite this, there are HEOP students like Julian who recognized and appreciated the head start provided by these programs. Julian articulated the advantage he gained, "I was able to meet some staff, see the school before everybody else, and basically got a head start on what was coming ahead of us. And those are good things because when school started, most people looked crazy looking for their class." His statement underscores a valuable aspect of summer bridge programs—the early familiarization with campus resources and personnel, which can foster a sense of readiness and confidence as the formal academic year begins.

Sense of Belonging

The significance of a sense of belonging as it relates to college engagement cannot be overstated. While HEOP and CSTEP students benefited from similar support systems at LAU, the research anticipated a notable difference in their reported sense of belonging. Surprisingly, data from Question 26 indicated that HEOP students initially experienced a higher rate of discrimination compared to their CSTEP counterparts, with an average pre-semester rating of 3.33 compared to 2.00 for CSTEP students (see Figure 3). However, this dynamic shifted significantly in the post-semester survey. HEOP students reported a sharp decrease in their perception of discrimination, with an average post-semester rating of 1.33, while CSTEP students reported a substantial increase to 3.33.

This contrasting trend suggests that HEOP students, who participated in a structured summer bridge program, may have benefited from the strong support networks and early integration provided by the program. The decrease in perceived discrimination for HEOP students could imply that their involvement in the program equipped them with the confidence and community connections needed to navigate the challenges of a predominantly White

institution (PWI) more effectively. These support systems likely played a critical role in reducing feelings of exclusion and promoting a stronger sense of belonging as the semester progressed.

Conversely, the increase in perceived discrimination among CSTEP students points to potential gaps in support and integration. Without the structured guidance and community-building activities of a summer bridge program, CSTEP students may have felt less prepared to handle the social and cultural challenges of the campus environment. This heightened perception of discrimination post-semester could reflect a growing awareness of their marginalization within the broader campus community, emphasizing the need for more comprehensive support systems that extend beyond academic readiness to include social and emotional integration.

The qualitative data provides context to these quantitative findings. Ali, an HEOP student, openly shared his experience of feeling isolated in a classroom setting, describing a sense of detachment and feeling as though he was the sole Black individual surrounded by white classmates. This highlights the nuanced nature of discrimination experiences that can impact students' sense of belonging. Similarly, Marcus, a CSTEP student, expressed challenges in integrating into the broader college community, noting "I would say probably my biggest challenge would probably be trying to integrate... because I feel like there's not a lot outside of the CSTEP office". His struggle to find a sense of belonging outside this environment underscores the importance of creating inclusive spaces across the entire campus.

Given these findings, while structured programs like HEOP can significantly mitigate feelings of discrimination and enhance a sense of belonging, there is a critical need for institutions to extend these support structures to all students, including those in less structured programs like CSTEP. A welcoming and inclusive campus climate that addresses the diverse needs of all students is essential for fostering engagement and retention. When students

experience a supportive environment that values their identity and contributions, their overall college experience and sense of belonging are greatly enhanced.

Motivation to Persevere Tied to Academic Success

The motivation of Black male students to persevere through the challenges of higher education and achieve academic success is a complex interplay of personal ambition, cultural expectations, and practical considerations. The data vividly illustrates that for many participants, their decision to attend college and their drive to succeed was heavily influenced by their family's values. The quantitative data from the survey supports this, as reflected in their responses to Question 8, which asked about the impact of potential employment opportunities on their decision to attend college. HEOP students, who reported an increase in their average rating from 3.00 pre-semester to 3.67 post-semester, appeared to gain a stronger conviction in the economic value of a college education as they progressed through the semester.

This aligns with the qualitative findings, where many participants expressed that their academic endeavors were not solely for personal advancement but also to fulfill familial aspirations and secure future financial stability. For these students, college was seen as a critical stepping stone to achieving long-term career goals and economic independence, reflecting the significant role of family influence in their educational journeys. The dedication to fulfilling these familial hopes acts as a powerful motivator, compelling students to engage more deeply with their studies and persist despite obstacles.

In contrast, CSTEP students showed a decrease in their average rating for Question 8, from 3.00 pre-semester to 2.67 post-semester, suggesting a waning confidence in the direct connection between their education and future employment opportunities. This could indicate that, without the structured support of a summer bridge program, CSTEP students may have

faced challenges in connecting their academic experiences with tangible career outcomes. Despite this, the qualitative data reveals that both HEOP and CSTEP students were driven by a desire to honor their families' expectations and aspirations.

For instance, Nathan, an HEOP participant, highlighted a poignant example of how individual motivation is shaped by familial influence and personal circumstances. Nathan's choice to pursue higher education was significantly impacted by his mother's guidance and aspirations for him. His narrative underscores a profound need for future security and independence, which he sees as attainable through the vehicle of a college education. Moreover, practical considerations like the proximity of the college, which enabled him to commute, played a non-trivial role in his decision-making process. This suggests that while personal motivation is indeed a significant factor in academic success, it is often intertwined with and cannot be easily separated from familial expectations and the practical realities of the students' lives.

Transition from High School to College

The results from the surveys and themes from the interviews underscore that the transition from high school to college serves as a crucial determinant of adaptation to higher education. This transition phase, which accounted for 22.2% of the thematic responses, highlights students' ability to adjust to the increased academic rigor and social dynamics of college life. Elijah's narrative vividly captures this transitional phase. He expressed eagerness for the freedom and opportunities that college life presents but also acknowledged the need to balance these newfound freedoms with existing family responsibilities. His story is mirrored in the quantitative data from Question 7, which measured students' perceptions of their preparedness to handle non-academic challenges, such as time management and social interactions. HEOP students reported an average post-semester rating of 3.00, up from 2.67 pre-

semester, indicating that while they felt somewhat more prepared, the balance between academic and personal life remained a persistent challenge.

Similarly, Julian's experience supplements this view, bringing to light the nuanced emotional landscape of this transition. He spoke of his excitement for the new experiences that college promised but also the difficulty of separating from his established support network. His struggle to find equilibrium among academic pursuits, social activities, and personal responsibilities reflects a broader theme of student adaptation. This is supported by responses to Question 21, where HEOP students rated their ability to balance academic and personal commitments at 3.67 post-semester, compared to 3.33 pre-semester. The slight improvement suggests that while students began to develop strategies to manage their new environment, the process was gradual and required significant personal effort. His reflections reveal that while college represents a significant opportunity, it also demands a recalibration of students' time management, social interactions, and academic engagement.

The data also showed that 22.2% of participants identified the transition phase as a significant challenge, reflecting broader patterns seen in responses to Question 17, which asked about students' perceived readiness for college life after participating in preparatory programs. CSTEP students, who did not have the same structured support as HEOP participants, reported an average rating of 2.67 post-semester, compared to HEOP's 3.00, highlighting the additional difficulties they faced in adjusting to the demands of college life.

These findings suggest that while both HEOP and CSTEP students recognized the opportunities college offered, the structured support of programs like the summer bridge initiative played a crucial role in helping HEOP students navigate the complexities of this transitional period. Without such support, as seen in CSTEP students' lower ratings, the

adjustment to college life can be more daunting and fragmented. Julian and Elijah's experiences, combined with the quantitative data, reveal that the transition from high school to college involves not only academic adaptation but also a significant emotional and social adjustment, requiring effective support systems to ensure students feel equipped to meet the challenges of higher education.

<center>**Answers to the Study's Research Questions**</center>

The core objective of this research was to investigate the role of summer bridge programs in enhancing the academic and social integration of traditional college-age Black males at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). The questions that guided this action research project were, 1.) How do summer bridge programs affect the transition from high school to college and overall retention at PWIs for Black males? 2.) What motivates Black male students to continue their education and persevere to graduation at PWIs? 3.) How do summer bridge programs contribute to the engagement of Black male students at PWIs? In this section, each question is addressed:

How do summer bridge programs focused on Black males affect their transition from high school to college and overall retention at predominantly White institutions (PWI)?

Summer bridge programs focused on Black males have a significant positive impact on their transition from high school to college and overall retention at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). The data shows that HEOP participants, who attended summer bridge programs, reported a much smoother adjustment to the college environment and a greater sense of academic preparedness compared to CSTEP students, who did not have access to similar programs. HEOP students rated these programs highly for their effectiveness in easing both academic and social adjustments, indicating that participation in summer bridge programs helps

these students feel more prepared and integrated as they begin their college journey. This enhanced transition experience contributes to better retention rates among Black male students at PWIs.

Additionally, personal narratives from participants like Julian highlight the importance of finding a balance in these programs between preparing students for the academic challenges ahead and recognizing the personal sacrifices they make in terms of time and experiences. For these programs to be perceived as beneficial rather than burdensome, they must offer both academic readiness and meaningful engagement without encroaching on students' personal time. Expanding summer bridge programs to include all incoming students, regardless of background, could provide a more universally supportive orientation to college life, ultimately improving retention for Black male students at PWIs.

What motivates Black males to persevere on to graduation at PWIs?

Black male students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) are motivated to persevere to graduation by a combination of familial expectations, personal aspirations, and institutional support structures. The study reveals that many participants are driven by a strong desire to meet their family's expectations and achieve future economic stability. For example, Nathan's decision to attend college was significantly shaped by his mother's hopes for his future and his own desire for security and independence. This demonstrates the powerful role that family expectations play in motivating these students to continue their education.

Additionally, the presence of mentorship and support services, such as those provided by the HEOP program, is critical in sustaining motivation among Black male students. Participants described these support structures as essential in helping them navigate the challenges of a predominantly White institution. These findings suggest that strengthening family engagement

and expanding mentorship programs could be effective strategies for enhancing motivation and improving retention rates for Black male students at PWIs.

How do summer bridge programs play a role in the increasing engagement of Black males at PWIs?

The study found that summer bridge programs were crucial in fostering early engagement by creating a sense of belonging and community for Black male students. These programs helped participants, like Ali from the HEOP program, feel more integrated and supported within the college environment, despite facing challenges such as discrimination and isolation. By providing a structured introduction to college life, summer bridge programs enabled Black male students to build connections and establish a sense of community, which were essential for their engagement and retention.

However, the persistence of feelings of isolation among some students indicated that, while these programs were effective, they were not sufficient on their own. To fully address the nuanced challenges of integration and belonging, summer bridge programs needed to be part of a broader institutional strategy that promoted a welcoming and inclusive campus environment. Enhancing these programs to support not only academic preparation but also cultural and social integration could further increase student engagement and success. Therefore, institutions should ensure that the benefits of these programs extend throughout the students' entire college experience to foster a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere for Black male students at PWIs.

Implications for Practice

The findings from this study suggest several important implications for higher education practitioners and administrators, particularly those involved in the support and retention of Black

male students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). First, it is crucial to recognize that summer bridge programs and similar initiatives are not only valuable for preparing students academically but also for providing a vital sense of community and belonging. However, the success of these programs is heavily dependent on the staff who implement them. These staff members often serve as extended family to students, providing critical academic and emotional support. However, they are frequently overworked and understaffed, leading to burnout that can undermine the effectiveness of these programs. Institutions should invest in resources to reduce staff workloads, offer professional development, and ensure their well-being.

Additionally, there is a need for a deeper institutional understanding and appreciation of the mission of these support offices and programs. Too often, these initiatives are perceived solely as diversity recruitment tools rather than as comprehensive programs designed to promote equity and inclusion in higher education. The foundational mission of these programs is to provide historically marginalized students—who may otherwise lack access to these opportunities—with the support they need to succeed in environments that are often not structured to meet their unique needs. By framing these programs as essential components of institutional equity rather than just recruitment efforts, colleges and universities can better allocate resources and create policies that support their long-term success. This includes advocating for the necessary funding, staff positions, and institutional support to expand the reach and effectiveness of these programs.

Ultimately, the implications for practice highlight the need for a holistic approach that supports both students and staff. Institutions must move beyond viewing these programs as isolated interventions and instead see them as integral to the fabric of the university's commitment to equity and inclusion. By doing so, they can ensure that these programs continue

to thrive and that the students they serve are empowered to succeed both academically and personally.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be noted. First, the sample size was limited to participants from specific summer bridge programs, which may not be representative of all Black male students at PWIs. Part of that was because having worked with this specific program for approximately four years, some students still considered me to be a mentor. To maintain objectivity and minimize potential bias, I chose not to include these students in the study, as their responses could have been influenced by our prior relationship.

Another limitation is the timeframe of the study. Although the research provided valuable insights into the experiences of students during their first semester, a longer study capturing the full experience from the first semester through the end of their second semester would have offered a more comprehensive understanding of how summer bridge programs impact retention and success over time. This extended timeframe could have provided a fuller picture of the programs' influence on students' academic and social integration from year to year.

In addition to the limitations previously discussed, the instruments used for data collection may have presented some challenges. The survey and interview questions, while carefully designed, may have had limitations in fully capturing the complexity of students' experiences. For example, the structured nature of surveys might not have allowed for deeper exploration of certain nuanced aspects of students' transitions, motivations, and sense of belonging. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data could have introduced bias, as participants may have provided responses they believed were socially acceptable rather than fully authentic reflections of their experiences.

A notable limitation occurred during one of the virtual interviews, where technical difficulties impacted the flow and quality of the conversation. The student's Wi-Fi connection was unstable, causing the interview to be interrupted multiple times. This forced us to restart the interview several times, which may have affected the student's ability to fully articulate their thoughts. Furthermore, the interruptions made it challenging to transcribe the interview accurately, as portions of the conversation were lost or unclear due to the poor connection. These disruptions could have influenced the depth and clarity of the data obtained during that particular interview, potentially affecting the overall findings.

The final limitation is related to my positionality as both a researcher and an advisor to the learners who participated in the study. Having gone through the HEOP program myself and worked with similar programs at different colleges for six years, my personal experiences could have introduced bias into the analysis of the findings. To address this, I clearly articulated my perspectives on summer bridge programs in Chapter 1, outlined my researcher positionality in Chapter 3, and made efforts to distinguish my personal opinions from the study's findings in Chapter 4. During data analysis, I incorporated direct quotations from participants' responses to ensure that conclusions were drawn based on the data, rather than my interpretations. Despite these measures, my background and connection to the program may still have influenced the study, which is an inherent limitation of research conducted by practitioners closely associated with their subject matter.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could explore the long-term impact of summer bridge programs on Black male students' academic and social outcomes beyond their first year. Such studies could provide valuable insights into the sustained influence of these programs on retention and graduation

rates. Additionally, research could examine the effectiveness of different types of bridge programs and their components to identify best practices for supporting this demographic.

Another area for future research could involve comparing the retention and experiences of Black males from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Socioeconomic status plays a significant role in shaping the college experience, and by contrasting the retention rates and academic journeys of Black male students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds with those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, researchers could gain a deeper understanding of how financial resources and social capital influence student success. Black male students from higher-income families may benefit from greater access to resources such as tutoring, private mentorship, or connections that facilitate smoother academic and social integration at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Conversely, students from lower-income families may face additional financial pressures and lack access to such resources, which could exacerbate the challenges they face in adjusting to the rigors of college life.

This research could also explore how family engagement interacts with socioeconomic status to influence retention and academic success. For Black males from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, family engagement may provide essential emotional and motivational support, acting as a form of cultural capital that helps students navigate the complexities of higher education. On the other hand, Black males from higher socioeconomic backgrounds might experience a different type of family involvement, where financial stability and access to social networks play a larger role in their academic persistence. Investigating these dynamics could provide a nuanced understanding of how family engagement varies across socioeconomic lines and how it impacts students' resilience and sense of belonging at PWIs.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the study's findings, providing answers to the research questions and discussing their implications for practice. The study revealed that while summer bridge programs are beneficial in supporting the transition and retention of Black male students at PWIs, they must be part of a broader strategy that includes ongoing support and culturally responsive programming. As someone who has personally experienced these programs and worked closely with them for several years, I understand the profound impact they can have on student success. However, my position as both a former participant and as an administrator has also allowed me to see the areas where these programs—and the institutions that house them—need further development to address the multifaceted challenges Black male students face.

In conclusion, this research highlights the importance of targeted support programs and inclusive campus cultures in promoting the academic and social success of Black male students at PWIs. My own experiences reinforce the critical need for institutions to recognize the value of these programs beyond mere recruitment efforts, understanding their role in fostering a sense of belonging and academic perseverance. By building on the strengths and addressing the challenges identified in this study, institutions can create more equitable and supportive educational environments for all students, ensuring that they are not only welcomed but fully supported in their journey to success.

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APPENDIX A

Email Communication

Hello!

My name is Kelvin Herrera-Hassan, and I am a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration program at Bradley University. You have been invited to participate in completing a survey and in a virtual interview regarding the effective student support retention programs for traditional college-age Black males at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). You have been selected due to your status as a black male in a student support retention program (HEOP) attending Mount Saint Mary College, a PWI. The interview will be conducted by myself, Kelvin Herrera-Hassan and the information you provide will assist in the completion of my action research, as required by my doctoral program at Bradley University.

Participation in the study would require that you take part in two virtual interviews, as well as filling out two surveys, which would work out to be a total of about two and a half hours. You will be sent a copy of the surveys at the beginning of the semester via email and can fill that out on your own time, it should take no more than 30 minutes to complete. There will be a one-week deadline to complete and submit the survey. Shortly after you complete the surveys, we'll have our first virtual interview that will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, within the first two weeks of the semester. Then, once the semester is complete, I'll email you a similar survey to complete, that shouldn't take more than 30 minutes as well. Following that, we'll schedule a time to have our last virtual interview that will take another 45 minutes to an hour.

If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email to schedule an interview time. Please understand that your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. Your involvement in this study will be kept confidential and any personal information you provide will not be connected to you, as I will use pseudonyms in this study in place of your real name.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me via email at kherrerahassan@bradley.edu or my faculty advisor, Dr. Jeffrey P. Bakken at jbakken@fsmail.bradley.edu

My hope is to begin the interviews around September 2023 and end no later than January 2024. I look forward to hearing back from you!

Sincerely,

Kelvin Herrera-Hassan, MBA
Pronouns: he/him/his
Executive Director, Office of Inclusive Excellence
309.677.2645
1501 W. Bradley Avenue Peoria, IL 61625

(e-mail communication to participants **not in** the HEOP program)

Hello!

My name is Kelvin Herrera-Hassan, and I am a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration program at Bradley University. You have been selected to participate in completing a survey and a virtual interview regarding the effective student support retention programs for traditional college-age Black males at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). The interview will be conducted by myself, Kelvin Herrera-Hassan and the information you provide will assist in the completion of my action research, as required by my doctoral program at Bradley University.

Participation in the study would require that you take part in two virtual interviews, as well as filling out two surveys, which would work out to be a total of about two and a half hours. You will be sent a copy of the surveys at the beginning of the fall semester via email and can fill that out on your own time, it should take no more than 30 minutes to complete. There will be a one-week deadline to complete and submit the survey. Shortly after you complete the survey, we'll have our first virtual interview that will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, within the first two weeks of the fall semester. Then, once the fall semester is complete, I'll email you a similar survey to complete, that shouldn't take more than 30 minutes as well. Following that, we'll schedule a time to have our last virtual interview that will take another 45 minutes to an hour.

If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email to schedule an interview time. Please understand that your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. Your involvement in this study will be kept confidential and any personal information you provide will not be connected to you, as I will use pseudonyms in this study in place of your real name.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me via email at kherrerahassan@bradley.edu or my faculty advisor, Dr. Jeffrey P. Bakken at jbakken@fsmail.bradley.edu

My hope is to begin the interviews around September 2023 and end no later than January 2024. I look forward to hearing back from you!

Sincerely,

Kelvin Herrera-Hassan, MBA
Pronouns: he/him/his
Executive Director, Office of Inclusive Excellence
309.677.2645
1501 W. Bradley Avenue Peoria, IL 61625

APPENDIX B

HEOP/CSTEP PRE-SEMESTER SURVEY

Pre-Semester Survey for Study on Student Support Retention Programs

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study regarding the effective student support retention programs for traditional college-age Black males at predominantly white institutions (PWIs)

* Indicates required question

1. Email *

_____

Factors that influenced your college decision

In this section you will be asked how the following items impacted your decision to attend college. Rate the following items on a scale of 1-4, 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree.

2. College reputation
   Mark only one oval.

   1   2   3   4

   Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

3. Campus location
   Mark only one oval.

   1   2   3   4

   Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

4. Academic programs
   Mark only one oval.

   1   2   3   4

   Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

5. Feeling of belonging
   Mark only one oval.

   1   2   3   4

   Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

6. Social activities
   Mark only one oval.

   1   2   3   4

   Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

7. Campus safety
   Mark only one oval.

   1   2   3   4

   Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

8. Campus size
   Mark only one oval.

   1   2   3   4

   Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

9. Employment opportunities after graduation
   Mark only one oval.

   1   2   3   4

   Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

10. Cost
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4

    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

11. Advice of teachers or guidance counselors
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4

    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

12. Availability of financial aid
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4

    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

13. College representatives
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4

    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

14. Attending summer bridge program (s) (Q7)
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4

    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

15. Attending orientation
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4

    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

16. Campus visit
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

17. Were there any other factors that influenced your decision to attend Mount Saint Mary College?

_____

For each of the following statements, please circle the number that best describes your point of view

In this section you will be asked how the following items impacted your decision to attend college. Rate the following items on a scale of 1-4, 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree.

18. I always knew I would attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

19. I have always thought that I am academically capable of attending college.
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

24. Participating in the summer bridge program made me feel prepared for this semester (Q17)
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

25. I know where to look for resources that will support my academic goals:
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

26. People other than my family influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

27. My friends influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

20. The HEOP summer program help me find 'community' this semester. (13)
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

21. Living close to a higher education institution influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

22. The curriculum in my high school influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

23. Knowledge of available financial aid influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

28. Most of my friends are attending college.
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

29. I have a mentor I can contact if I have questions or if I'm feeling overwhelmed:
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

30. I feel academically prepared for classes this semester:
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

31. I know what I want to study and major in:
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

32. I felt like having a bridge program has helped me with the transition to college. (25)
Mark only one oval.

         1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

33. I know what to expect for my first semester of college:
Mark only one oval.

         1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

34. I believe I will be successful in college:
Mark only one oval.

         1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

35. I know who I can go to in case I need help or support with classes:
Mark only one oval.

         1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

36. I am financially prepared for college:
Mark only one oval.

         1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

37. I know and understand the financial aid application process at my school:
Mark only one oval.

         1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

38. I know that I will graduate college in 4 years:
Mark only one oval.

         1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

39. I came into this semester feeling prepared to succeed
Mark only one oval.

         1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

Informed consent

Once you complete the survey, this information will only be accessed by the researcher and faculty advisor. Your involvement in this study will be kept confidential and any personal information you provide will not be connected to you, as I will use pseudonyms in this study in place of your real name and there will be no link between your name and the research record. Taking part in this study is voluntary. You will not receive compensation or incentives for participating in this study. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Once the study is completed, the recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed (deleted). Questions about this study may be directed to me, Kelvin Herrera-Hassan, at (309) 677-2645 or kherrerahassan@bradley.edu, you can also reach out to the faculty advisor in charge of this study: Dr. Bakken at (309) 677- 3997 or jbakken@fsmail.bradley.edu. If you have general questions about being a research participant, you may contact the Bradley Committee on the Use of Human Subjects office at (309) 677-3877.

40.

You are voluntarily making a decision to participate in this study. By checking the *
'I agree' box below, that means that you have read and understand the information presented in the **'informed consent form'** and have decided to participate. Your **participation** also means that all of your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. If you think of any additional questions, you should contact the researcher(s)
Check all that apply.

    I agree
    I disagree (I do not want to participate in this study)

APPENDIX C

HEOP POST-SEMESTER SURVEY

HEOP Post-Semester Survey for Study on Student Support Retention Programs

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study regarding the effective student support retention programs for traditional college-age Black males at predominantly white institutions (PWIs)

Congrats on completing your first semester of college!

* Indicates required question

1. Email *

_____

2. First name*

_____

3. Last name*

_____

4. Current Major*

_____

5. Do you live on campus?*

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

6. Do you currently work? (whether work-study or part-time/full time work outside of class) *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

7. Class year*

Mark only one oval.

◯ First year

◯ Second year

◯ Third year

◯ Fourth Year

◯ Fifth Year

◯ Grad Student

◯ Other: _____

8. Are you the first in your immediate family to attend college?*

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ I'm not sure

9. Parental (or guardian) education level:*

Mark only one oval.

◯ Highschool

◯ College

◯ Some College

◯ Masters

◯ Doctorate

◯ I don't know

◯ Other: _____

10. Current cumulative (overall) GPA:*

_____

11. Have you ever been on academic warning or probation?

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

Your first semester at college

In this section you will be asked how the following items impacted your decision to attend college. Rate the following items on a scale of 1-4, 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree.

12. I feel that I understand what my professors expect of me academically

Mark only one oval.

      1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

13. I developed effective study skills

Mark only one oval.

      1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

14. Managed your time effectively

Mark only one oval.

      1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

15. Develop close friendships with other students

Mark only one oval.

      1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

16. I've felt lonely or homesick
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

17. That your job responsibilities interfered with your schoolwork
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

18. That your family responsibilities interfered with your schoolwork
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

19. I felt like participating in a bridge program would have helped me acclimate to the campus better.
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

24. I've felt overwhelmed by all you had to do
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

25. Contributed money to help support my family
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

26. I have felt discriminated against at this institution because of my race/ethnicity, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration/citizenship status, religion, or disability status
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

27. I performed better this semester because I was in a summer bridge program
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

20. That faculty encouraged me to ask questions and participate in discussion
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

21. I feel like I have the ability to see the world from someone else's perspective
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

22. I feel like I have an openness to having my own views challenged
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

23. I feel like I have that ability to work cooperatively with diverse people
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

28. I see myself as part of the campus community
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

29. At least one staff member has taken an interest in my development
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

30. I believe the summer bridge program contributed to my active involvement and sense of belonging at the Mount
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

31. In class, I have heard faculty express stereotypes based on race/ethnicity, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration/citizenship status, religion, or disability status
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

32. I see myself as part of the campus community
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

33. Felt ignored or invisible because your race/ethnicity
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

34. I see myself as part of the campus community
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

35. I feel I am a member of this college
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

36. I would recommend everyone partake in a summer bridge program
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

37. If asked, I would recommend this college to others
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

38. If asked, I would recommend this college to others
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

39. I feel a sense of belonging to this campus
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

40. The HEOP summer program is the reason why I stayed at the Mount
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

41. Were there any other factors that impacted your first semester at Mount Saint Mary College?

For each of the following statements, please circle the number that best describes your point of view

In this section you will be asked how the following items impacted your decision to attend college. Rate the following items on a scale of 1-4, 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree.

42. I always knew I would attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

43. I have always thought that I am academically capable of attending college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

44. Living close to a higher education institution influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

45. The curriculum in my high school influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

46. Knowledge of available financial aid influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

47. I know where to look for resources that will support my academic goals:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

48. People other than my family influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

49. My friends influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

50. Most of my friends are attending college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

51. I have a mentor I can contact if I have questions or if I'm feeling overwhelmed:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

52. I feel academically prepared for classes this semester:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

53. I know what I want to study and major in:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

54. I know what to expect for my first semester of college:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

55. I believe I will be successful in college:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

56. I know who I can go to in case I need help or support with classes:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

57. I am financially prepared for college:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

58. I know and understand the financial aid application process at my school:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

59. I know that I will graduate college in 4 years:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

Informed consent

Once you complete the survey, this information will only be accessed by the researcher and faculty advisor. Your involvement in this study will be kept confidential and any personal information you provide will not be connected to you, as I will use pseudonyms in this study in place of your real name and there will be no link between your name and the research record. Taking part in this study is voluntary. You will not receive compensation or incentives for participating in this study. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Once the study is completed, the recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed (deleted). Questions about this study may be directed to me, Kelvin Herrera-Hassan, at (309) 677-2645 or kherrerahassan@bradley.edu, you can also reach out to the faculty advisor in charge of this study: Dr. Bakken at (309) 677- 3997 or jbakken@fsmail.bradley.edu. If you have general questions about being a research participant, you may contact the Bradley Committee on the Use of Human Subjects office at (309) 677-3877.

60. You are voluntarily making a decision to participate in this study. By checking the *
'I agree' box below, that means that you have read and understand the information presented in the **'informed consent form'** and have decided to participate. Your **participation** also means that all of your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. If you think of any additional questions, you should contact the researcher(s)
Check all that apply.

☐ I agree
☐ I disagree (I do not want to participate in this study)

APPENDIX D

CSTEP POST-SEMESTER SURVEY

CSTEP Post-Semester Survey for Study on Student Support Retention Programs

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study regarding the effective student support retention programs for traditional college-age Black males at predominantly white institutions (PWIs)

* Indicates required question

1. Email *

2. First name

3. Last name*

4. Current Major*

5. Do you live on campus?*
   Mark only one oval.
   - ( ) Yes
   - ( ) No

6. Do you currently work? (whether work-study or part-time/full time work outside of class)*
   Mark only one oval.
   - ( ) Yes
   - ( ) No

11. Have you ever been on academic warning or probation?
    Mark only one oval.
    - ( ) Yes
    - ( ) No

Based on your first semester at college

In this section you will be asked how the following items impacted your decision to attend college. Rate the following items on a scale of 1-4, 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree.

12. I feel that I understand what my professors expect of me academically
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4
    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

13. I developed effective study skills
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4
    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

14. Managed your time effectively
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4
    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

7. Class year*
   Mark only one oval.
   - ( ) First year
   - ( ) Second year
   - ( ) Third year
   - ( ) Fourth Year
   - ( ) Fifth Year
   - ( ) Grad Student
   - ( ) Other: _____

8. Are you the first in your immediate family to attend college?*
   Mark only one oval.
   - ( ) Yes
   - ( ) No
   - ( ) I'm not sure

9. Parental (or guardian) education level:*
   Mark only one oval.
   - ( ) Highschool
   - ( ) College
   - ( ) Some College
   - ( ) Masters
   - ( ) Doctorate
   - ( ) I don't know
   - ( ) Other: _____

10. Current cumulative (overall) GPA:*

15. Develop close friendships with other students
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4
    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

16. I've felt lonely or homesick
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4
    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

17. That your job responsibilities interfered with your schoolwork
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4
    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

18. That your family responsibilities interfered with your schoolwork
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4
    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

19. I felt like participating in a bridge program would've helped me acclimate to the campus better.
    Mark only one oval.

    1   2   3   4
    Strongly Disagree ( ) Strongly Agree

20. That faculty encouraged me to ask questions and participate in discussion
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

21. I feel like I have the ability to see the world from someone else's perspective
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

22. I feel like I have an openness to having my own views challenged
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

23. I feel like I have that ability to work cooperatively with diverse people
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

24. I've felt overwhelmed by all you had to do
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

30. In class, I have heard faculty express stereotypes based on race/ethnicity, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration/citizenship status, religion, or disability status
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

31. I see myself as part of the campus community
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

32. Felt ignored or invisible because your race/ethnicity
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

33. I see myself as part of the campus community
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

34. I feel I am a member of this college
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

25. Contributed money to help support my family
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

26. I have felt discriminated against at this institution because of my race/ethnicity, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration/citizenship status, religion, or disability status
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

27. I would've performed better this semester if I was in a summer bridge program.
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

28. I see myself as part of the campus community
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

29. At least one staff member has taken an interest in my development
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

35. If the school offered a summer bridge program, I would've participated in it.
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

36. If asked, I would recommend this college to others
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

37. I feel a sense of belonging to this campus
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

38. I feel that if I was a part of summer bridge program, it would've helped my sense of belonging on campus
Mark only one oval.

1   2   3   4

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

39. Were there any other factors that impacted your first semester at Mount Saint Mary College?

_____

For each of the following statements, please circle the number that best describes your point of view

In this section you will be asked how the following items impacted your decision to attend college. Rate the following items on a scale of 1-4, 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree.

40. I always knew I would attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

41. I have always thought that I am academically capable of attending college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

42. Living close to a higher education institution influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

43. The curriculum in my high school influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

44. Knowledge of available financial aid influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

45. I know where to look for resources that will support my academic goals:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

46. People other than my family influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

47. My friends influenced my decision to attend college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

48. Most of my friends are attending college.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

49. I have a mentor I can contact if I have questions or if I'm feeling overwhelmed:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

50. I feel academically prepared for classes this semester:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

51. I know what I want to study and major in:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

52. I know what to expect for my first semester of college:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

53. I believe I will be successful in college:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

54. I know who I can go to in case I need help or support with classes:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

55. I am financially prepared for college:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

56. I know and understand the financial aid application process at my school:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

57. I know that I will graduate college in 4 years:
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4
Strongly Disagree ◯ Strongly Agree

Informed consent

Once you complete the survey, this information will only be accessed by the researcher and faculty advisor. Your involvement in this study will be kept confidential and any personal information you provide will not be connected to you, as I will use pseudonyms in this study in place of your real name and there will be no link between your name and the research record. Taking part in this study is voluntary. You will not receive compensation or incentives for participating in this study. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Once the study is completed, the recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed (deleted). Questions about this study may be directed to me, Kelvin Herrera-Hassan, at (309) 677-2645 or kherrerahassan@bradley.edu, you can also reach out to the faculty advisor in charge of this study: Dr. Bakken at (309) 677- 3997 or jbakken@fsmail.bradley.edu. If you have general questions about being a research participant, you may contact the Bradley Committee on the Use of Human Subjects office at (309) 677-3877.

58. You are voluntarily making a decision to participate in this study. By checking the **'I agree'** box   *
below, that means that you have read and understand the information presented in the
'informed consent form' and have decided to participate. Your **participation** also means that
all of your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. If you think of any additional
questions, you should contact the researcher(s)
Check all that apply.

☐ I agree
☐ I disagree (I do not want to participate in this study)

APPENDIX E

Pre-semester Semi-Structured Interview Script for both student groups

1. What is your major?

2. Do you live on campus?

3. Where did you go to high school?

4. How did you feel graduating high school?

    1. Did you think most of your teachers expected you to continue your education?

5. What are you most looking forward to experiencing during your first semester?

6. What reservations do you have about attending college?

7. Are you the first person from your family attending college?

8. Do you know what you already want to do when you graduate?

    1. What GPA do you think you'll need to get a job in that field?

    2. What GPA are you aiming for this semester?

9. What is the highest level of education you expect to achieve?

10. What do you expect to be the most challenging aspect of your first year of college?

11. Anything else you would like to add based on my research topic?

APPENDIX E

Post Semester Semi-Structured Interview Script for students

1. Tell me about your decision to attend college.

   1. When did you first decide to attend college?

   2. Who would say, if anybody, influenced your decision?

   3. Was location a factor?

2. Tell me about how things were when you first started college?

   1. What were the first few weeks like?

   2. Who were your first friends?

   3. How were classes during that first couple of weeks?

   4. Where did you feel like your support came from?

1. Tell me about your first semester in college?

   1. Who were your friend groups?

   2. How would you say things went in classes?

2. Did you join any organizations or groups that first semester?

3. What influenced you to stay through the first semester?

4. What made you decide to come back for your second semester?

5. Would you say anyone at the college motivates you?

   1. If so, who and why?

   2. How would you say that relationship began?

6. When you need help or have questions about something regarding college, who do you go to?

   1. Do you have a faculty/staff member that you can go to for advice?

    2. Do you have someone you can call a "mentor"?

    3. Do they look like you?

    4. How did you get connected with them?

    5. Would you say their race or gender mattered?

7. How would you describe the overall experience at this PWI?

    1. How would you describe the climate at this PWI?

    2. Did you experience any challenges while being here?

1. To what extent do you believe that participating in the bridge program enhanced your active involvement and engagement within the PWI community?

2. Have you ever thought about leaving the institution?

    1. If so, who did you speak to about this?

    2. Ultimately, what made you stay?